DEALING WITH DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM:
TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

by

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DECLARATION

I, Wayne Don Alexander, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Signed: **Date:**

ABSTRACT

This study explores how fifty primary school teachers in the Cape Peninsula, South Africa understand the concept diversity and how they indicate that they manage diversity in their classrooms.

The study locates the discussion on diversity and classroom practice within the context of socio-political change in South Africa. Classrooms in South Africa today encompass an array of races, languages, traditions, belief systems and religions. This reflects a shift from the apartheid past where learner populations were more homogenous. With this shift in learner demography, teachers face multiple and complex issues that may challenge many of their educational practices and assumptions.

The key theoretical concepts underpinning this study were those of critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism. These concepts were deemed appropriate because of the location of the study within a framework of social justice.

Qualitative research was employed in the collection of the data. Teachers' understanding of diversity and their accounts of how they manage diversity were explored through questionnaires, interviews and a focus group discussion.

The study showed that diversity was understood by the teachers in the study as an all-encompassing concept underscored by notions of social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles. The study drew attention to the interconnectedness of race, socio-economic factors, language, religion, learning styles and resources as the main issues that teachers confront in the classrooms. These issues are common across the former

racially-based departments of education; however different social conditions led to different issues being prioritized by the teachers.

Teachers acknowledged the importance and need to incorporate diversity issues into their learning areas and daily classroom practice to improve the life chances of learners. They indicated that, despite policy changes supporting diversity education, they had not been formally prepared for their new roles. On the whole, they managed diversity through multi-culturalism, social activities, assimilation and a caring approach.

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DEDICATION

For Carol, Mathew and Samuel

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GLOSSARY

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CNE	Christian National Education
DoE	Department of Education
DET	Department of Education and Training (African)
FDE	Further Diploma in Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FP	Foundation Phase
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
HOA	House of Assembly (White) (former Model C)
HOD	House of Delegates (Indian)
HOR	House of Representatives (Coloured)
INSET	In-service Education
IP	Intermediate phase
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PEI	President's Education Initiative
PRAESA	Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa
RiEP	Religion in Education Policy
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASA	South African Schools Act
SP	Senior Phase
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER ONE
AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1   INTRODUCTION

In 1994 the democratically elected government in South Africa inherited a divided and unequal system of education. Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments separated by race and geography but underpinned by a single ideology, Christian National Education (CNE). The curriculum of each department played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality and imbalances based on the notion of separateness. The philosophy was linked to the broader institutionalised divisions of South African society under apartheid.

The education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic, and political life. Under apartheid legislation, diversity was viewed not as differences that should be respected; rather it was synonymously linked with discrimination, ignoring its potential to recognise the rich mixture of diversity. A specific form of diversity was fostered, namely that different nations. Language and ethnic groups were forced to exist separately and were supported by political structures (Weisse, 2005). This was the basis for apartheid's use of diversity that manifested in the suppressive dominance of one population group over the rest of South Africa's inhabitants. Under these circumstances diversity was shaped by power and used exclusively in such terms (Weisse, 2005), excluding the majority of inhabitants from opportunities.

In education, the South African Schools Act of 1996 repealed the many discriminatory laws that existed under the apartheid system, establishing a national non-racial, non-discriminatory education system. However, South

Africa is still faced with challenges of inequality linked to issues such as race, class, language, religion and gender. Many schools house learners from a variety of cultural, racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, who often speak different home languages and who might have special educational needs.

This study focuses on the link between diversity, classroom practice and educational change in a context of socio-political transformation in South Africa. The study explores teachers' understanding of diversity and why they do what they do in the classroom. In so doing, the study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the challenge of teaching diverse learner populations. Drawing on the notion that the pedagogic task of classroom teaching could not be separated from the social task of nation building and economic improvement, the study sets out to explore how teachers deal with diversity in the classroom.

The interest in exploring the relationship between how teachers understand diversity and their classroom practice derives from a perspective that teachers have varying perspectives of diversity and how to deal with it in the classroom (Grant and Sleeter, 1997).

A qualitative study was conducted on a sample of 50 primary school teachers in the Western Cape. The main purpose of this research was to explore how primary school teachers understand diversity, to identify what their diversity issues are and to investigate how they deal with diversity in the classroom.

Thus, the research questions investigated in this study are:

a)   How do teachers understand diversity?

b)   How do teachers manage diversity in their classrooms?

A broad understanding of diversity is embraced by the national Department of Education (DoE) in South Africa, which claims that diversity has many meanings. It includes race, class, gender, religion, culture, different levels of physical and mental ability, different talents, different sexual orientations, different lifestyles, family norms, and different languages (DoE, 2000). While diversity includes the rich mixture of differences that make up societies, the similarities that exist are important connecting factors that contribute to the social fabric of societies. This view is aligned with the international vision presented by UNESCO (2003) that education needs to find content and learning strategies that enable all to learn to live together, and which is reinforced in South Africa by the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy and the Revised National Curriculum Statements (DoE, 2002).

This study was open to the multifarious conceptions and experiences of diversity expressed by the teachers. Their conceptions resonate with the definition formulated by Cushner et al (1992), "diversity is about differences based on gender, ethnicity, race, class, poverty, culture, religion, language, age and handicapping conditions, different backgrounds, economics, social, psychological, physical, intellectual differences, and learning styles" (1992, p29).

At a conceptual level, this study, rather than just placing emphasis on acknowledging and respecting differences, also raises an awareness of how differences are located in unequal power relations and socio-economic imbalances. In this regard, a social justice orientation as presented by Fraser and Honneth (2003) provides a useful theoretical framework for diversity. Fraser outlines that social justice involves both the "redistribution of resources and wealth and the politics of recognition" (2003, p58). Diversity reveals an interweaving of elements of social life,

political contestation, state intervention, power relations in terms of race, class, language and a host of other social dynamics.

Exploring how teachers deal with diversity in the classroom was informed by a social justice agenda, drawing on both national and international information. At a national level, the research was informed by the constitution of the country and education policy aimed at breaking down the barriers of apartheid. The National Curriculum Statements for schools explicitly indicate that schools need to acknowledge the goals set out in the Constitution, through developing the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. From an international perspective, the research draws on the vision articulated by UNESCO (2003) that *education needs to find content and learning strategies that enable all to learn to live together.* This research explores how teachers understand and approach diversity in the classroom, and in so doing, aims to contribute to the understanding and skills of teachers working in a context of diversity.

1.2   BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND ORIGIN OF THE RESEARCH

Observations by Grant and Sleeter (1997) show that teachers have varying perspectives of *human differences and of how to handle human diversity in the classroom.* Although the situation may be well documented internationally, there is a dearth of studies asking South African teachers their opinions of working in a context of diversity. Furthermore, studies conducted in South Africa after 1994 highlight the deep continuities of the apartheid era (Nkomo et al, 2004), with access to schools still being dominated by race, class, culture and language.

The new school curriculum in South Africa is sensitive to issues of diversity, for example, poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age

and disability. The curriculum intends for schools to acknowledge the goals set out in the constitution, through developing the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. However, the current curriculum (that places citizenship and rights at its centre) raises many issues regarding the integration of policies and practices. Educators have to face the issue of diversity in the classroom for which they may not have been professionally prepared (Robinson, 2003); the policy seems to presuppose that there is a common understanding of diversity by educators and knowledge of how to implement programmes. It is this notion of "common understanding" that was investigated in this study.

If it is recognised that teachers are instrumental in shaping the development of learners, then it also needs to be acknowledged that they would need strategies and techniques that will help learners develop appropriate attitudes and values to cope in a diverse society. In this regard, Grant and Sleeter (1997) refer to the need for social action in order to help learners understand the issues more fully. This, in itself, is an empowering process which will probably cause the learners to grow to be active and involved citizens. This resonates with the concept of citizenship development and social justice as cited within the national curriculum policy of South Africa.

In South Africa, the historical and legislative context of post-apartheid South Africa has focused much attention on the need to enhance the life chances of all, regardless of their background. New policies and recent interventions have started to focus attention on issues of diversity. At a national level, the Department of Education has developed a manifesto of values including the values of social justice and equity, and non-racism and non-sexism to guide educational practice (2001). However, a colloquium organised by the Human Science Research Council (Nkomo, McKinney, and Chisholm, 2004) illuminates that while national policy has

set out the frame for working in integrated schools, research into how teachers are working within the new framework in the classroom is still in its infancy. This research is aimed at ascertaining the teachers' perspectives and contributing to that discussion.

1.3   CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this section the demographics of the Western Cape is explained and an illustration of the social manifestations of diversity is presented.

1.3.1 The demographic context

In this thesis, the apartheid racial categories will be used as these categories are so definitive to the research. This includes black (to refer to African blacks), white (to refer to people of European ancestry), Indian (to refer to people of Indian ancestry) and coloured (to refer to people of mixed racial origin).

In 1994, schools, learners and educators in the Western Cape were still separated into four departments each accommodating a different racial group – Department of Education and Training (DET), (black), House of Representative (HOR), (coloured), House of Delegates (HOD), (Indian), and House of Assembly (HOA), (white). The apartheid government's discriminatory policies in education determined which schools learners could attend. In keeping with apartheid policies, the HOA schools (whites) were offered superior resources to particularly DET (black) schools, with HOR (coloured) and HOD (Indian) schools receiving less resources than HOA schools but more than DET schools.

In 2006 there were 1470 schools recorded in the Western Cape, South Africa and most of them accommodate the historically disadvantaged communities. Historically, education in the Western Cape system consists of both advantaged and disadvantaged schools which reflect different economic, race, language and religion compositions. The former HOA (white) schools remain the most advantaged, reflecting easier access to cultural and financial capital, smaller class sizes and higher levels of learner achievement. On the other hand, there are large numbers of disadvantaged schools where conditions are challenging specifically in relation to the environmental conditions (poverty, gangsterism, crime) and underdeveloped infrastructure (Human Capital Development Strategy for the Western Cape, 2006.)

Table 1.1: Western Cape: Number of Learners by Former Department, 2001

Number of learners, by population group	DET (Black)	HOR (Coloured)	HOD (Indian)	HOA (White)	Total
Primary schools	109,374	377,211	1,182	91,348	579,115
Secondary schools	62,419	160,732	2,823	73,269	299,243
Total	171,793	537,943	4,005	164,617	878,358
Percentage	20%	61%	0,5%	19%	100%

Source: WCED CEMIS data, 2004

Table 1.1 offers some historical background to the context of teaching and learning relevant for this study. It shows that the majority of learners in the Western Cape are classified coloured, followed by blacks, whites and Indians. Race has been cited as it is the most overt manifestation of

diversity in schools and closely linked to changes that teachers have had to face in a post-apartheid era.

Although there have been some shifts in the racial profile of learners at schools in the Western Cape, Table 1.2 reveals that learners still mainly attend schools established for their specific race group. However, there are indications that the profiles of the schools are changing as learners migrate across racial boundaries. It shows, in particular, a high number of enrolment of coloured learners at former HOA schools and high number of enrolment of black learners at former HOR schools.

Table 1.2: Western Cape: Learner Enrolment per Racial Classification, 2004

BAND	EX-DEPT	BLACK	COLOURED	INDIAN/ ASIAN	WHITE	OTHER
FET	HOA	1925	10357	432	20657	8163
	DET	43802	148	0	0	0
	HOD	8	313	310	0	630
	HOR	6960	76858	66	15	3762
GET	HOA	7695	39488	1541	65615	16043
	DET	143919	1685	0	0	83
	HOD	104	801	915	1	1025
	HOR	39789	415928	601	103	11434
LSEN		4248	8964	127	2865	538

Source: WCED, 2006

FET: Further Education and Training (Grades 10 to 12)
GET: General Education and Training (Grades R to 9)
HOA: House of Assembly
DET: Department of Education and Training
HOD: House of Delegates
HOR: House of Representatives
LSEN: Learners with Special Education Needs
OTHER: Mixed races and non-South African citizens

Besides race and poverty, dealing with learners from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, and who speak different home languages, are challenges facing the teaching fraternity in the Western Cape. The distribution of language nationally shows that the top home language is Zulu, followed by Xhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, and then English (Statistics, South Africa, 2007). In the Western Cape the main languages are Afrikaans (55,3%), Xhosa (23,7%) and English (19,3%), while the distribution at schools are 48,7% Afrikaans, 32,7% English, 18,4 % Xhosa and 0,22% the other European and African languages spoken in the Western Cape (Cemis, Western Cape Education Department, 2007). The gender enrolment (50,8% female and 49,2% male) shows an almost equal distribution with slightly more girls attending school in the Western Cape. The religious makeup of the Western Cape is Christian (81,8%), Muslim (6,5%), Jewish (0,4%), Hindu (0,2%). Of the population, 9% indicated that they have no religion while 2,1% have other forms of beliefs (Statistics, South Africa, 2007). The other forms of beliefs entailed religions other than those cited, for example, Rastafarianism.

Other demography of the Western Cape's children (0 – 17 years) worth noting for this study includes the number and proportion of children living in income poverty levels, receiving social grants and where there is child hunger. Income poverty level is important as it indicates how many children may not have their basic needs met. As money is needed to access a range of services, income poverty is often closely related to poor health, reduced access to education, and physical environments that compromise personal safety (South African Child Gauge, 2007/8). The proportion of children living in income poverty (earnings of R1 200 per month) in the Western Cape is 41% (Statistics, South Africa, 2006), while 58% children between the ages of 0 – 13 were receiving social grants (South African Child Gauge, 2007/8).

Hunger is used as an indicator to monitor the extent of food insecurity among households with children in South Africa (South African Child Gauge, 2007/8). Children who are nutritionally deprived are vulnerable to cognitive and other developmental impairments that include lower intelligence, poor educational outcomes, stunting, wasting, and a diminished capacity for work in adulthood (South African Child Gauge, 2007/8). The national statistics show that 18% of black children followed by 9% coloured, 1% white and 0,5% Indian children lived in households where there was child hunger. In 2006, the proportion for the Western Cape was 12%. The data shows that those who were historically disadvantaged still experience hardship and remain adversely affected by the legacy of apartheid which has resulted in gross inequities and poor access to resources.

Drawing on data from the annual survey of WCED, 45% of the schools representing 345 000 learners in the poorest of the 1470 schools in the Western Cape have been identified "no school fees" schools. These schools are allocated more financial support, granted according to poverty quintiles with the poorest schools being placed into quintile one. The schools were categorised into four quintiles determined by the poverty level in the school and the budget available for this purpose.

This was based on the poverty income index and currently 14 485 schools in the country are "no fee" schools. In the Western Cape, 670 schools fall into the category while ten of the teachers in this study teach at such schools.

The demographics of the Western Cape offer a context for this research question as many schools in the Western Cape now include learners from

a variety of racial, socio-economic, language and religious backgrounds with many different learning challenges.

1.3.2 Social manifestation of diversity in South Africa

At the heart of school integration policies in South Africa are the values, rights and freedoms that promote self-development and fulfillment of human beings which involves human dignity, equality and freedom in cultural preferences. This specifically guarantees non-discrimination by the state and other persons on the grounds of personal attributes such as race, sex, gender and age, and on the basis of cultural preferences such as religion, language and culture (Nkomo et al, 2004). Despite this framework disputes regarding diversity still exist as displayed in the following discussion.

Conflicts in schools over race, fees, religion, customs or language are frequently displayed in South African media. These reflect the multifaceted issue of learner diversity, encompassing racial, class, gender, religious, linguistic, physical and other differences. The need to deal with and manage such issues therefore poses many challenges for schools and teachers.

The Weekend Argus of 19 May 2007 published an article that looked at events that schools are confronted with in term of diversity, specifically religion and culture. The article highlighted issues related to religion, dress code, admission policy and appearance, which, in terms of the South African Schools Act, the school governing body has the right to determine.

The article expanded on the plight of a 10-year-old Rastafarian who was not allowed admission at a particular school in the Western Cape because

of his dreadlocks. This hairstyle was in keeping with his religion, namely Rastafarianism. In such a situation, the parents are able to appeal to the Minister of Education who has the right to apply his/her mind in terms of the South African Schools Act.

Another incident involving religion and culture was that of a school's matric dance which was planned within the Muslims' holy month of Ramadaan, a period where Muslims generally abstain from all forms of social entertainment. This meant that the Muslim learners at this school would not be able to attend, thus being excluded from an important social event on a school's calendar.

In a case in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal, a full bench of the Constitutional Court was asked to hand down judgment about what accessories could be worn by school learners. This was an appeal lodged with the Constitutional Court on a learner's right to wear a nose stud to school – something the family claimed was part of family culture and tradition. The case was tabled at the Equality Court, which upheld the school's stance. These were all cited in the Weekend Argus of 19 May 2007.

Other reports have also highlighted incidents in schools where racial tension has been rife. The incidents of racial tension and violence in Vryburg and Oudtshoorn are cases in point. In Oudtshoorn, a town in the Western Cape, South Africa, a video clip showing a white pupil attacking a coloured pupil in the presence of a white teacher who allegedly did not intervene, surfaced. This incident happened in 2007. In another case in the Western Cape in 2007, it has been reported by pupils that the teachers told them, "coloureds are rubbish and have no manners".

The then National Minister of Education (2004) has been quoted in replying to the racial violence issue that the approach to first mix and then

to engage with issues of race is problematic. Furthermore, the then Minister of Education in the Western Cape has viewed racial tension and violence as a serious issue. In The Teacher (2000), a newspaper for teachers, it was stated, "A culture has developed in some schools to cover up things – mainly racial problems – to avoid embarrassment". The former National Minister of Education, Minister Pandor, stated in 2004 that the Department of Education's focus on values would have to be internalised by schools. The challenge is not simply racial integration; it is the successful promotion of the values of dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. The challenge, according to the Minister, is to teach that skin colour is not a marker of superiority and inferiority, but that one needs to take pride in one's culture and heritage.

The report suggests that in dealing with diversity issues, the education system should apply pressure on principals to institute programmes that will make the children more comfortable at schools.

The reports in this section unravel the intricacies surrounding diversity issues and present illuminative ways in which the apartheid state through policy and education created a superior and an inferior sense of self that continues to frame current education situations entrenched in the many existing forms of discrimination.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The literature on diversity reveals that a study on the perspectives of teachers regarding diversity is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa. On the other hand, research on diversity in the classroom has been focused upon in other parts of the western world for a long time, in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

By using qualitative research methods to study primary school teachers' understanding of diversity, the intention was to find out what conceptual tools and practical tools they draw on to deal with diversity in the classroom. The findings generated were analysed in relation to a variety of theoretical approaches in order to document teachers' experiences of working with diversity, thereby contributing to narrowing the potential gap between policy and practice.

The sample of teachers was diverse in terms of teacher-training backgrounds, race, gender, religion, language and contrasting teaching contexts. The study revealed that the teachers are confronted with diversity issues such as poverty, race, religion, culture and language, with socio-economic factors impacting on learning and teaching. The challenge is to bring together the teachers' constructs and conceptions that inform their practice in relation to social transition.

The issue of diversity may be regarded as one of the biggest challenges for teacher education. Reports have shown that migration of learners from historically disadvantaged schools to former white schools has grown since the ushering in of democracy in South Africa in 1994. The legacy of the past and the imbalances it presented has seen blacks and coloureds moving to historically white schools or blacks to coloured schools. Reports indicate that it is rare that shifts would be from white to historically disadvantaged schools and that teachers who teach in these diverse schools are in the majority still white. They are in the main not trained to deal with diversity, a situation faced by all teachers in the education system who were trained during the apartheid era.

As teachers are the most important partners in supporting and promoting diversity in schools, the creativity and sensitivity of teachers to use all

resources at their disposal to highlight the differences that make each child unique, is critical to the learning and teaching process.

Furthermore, the classroom work of teachers and students is both dependent on and constitutive of the policy, structural and socio-cultural features of the education system (Cornbleth, 1990). It is within this context that this research on diversity is conducted.

1.5   DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to a group of 50 primary school teachers in the Cape Peninsula region of the Western Cape province of South Africa. This was a group of diverse teachers who taught in contrasting contexts. However, most of the teachers were coloured females teaching at the foundation level.

The study focused on how teachers understood and approached diversity in the classroom. The study did not extend to areas such as the organisational culture (mission, ethos, communication systems) and management practices of the school. It also did not investigate how parents and learners understood the issue of diversity. Another limitation of the study is that it did not examine the issues of diversity in relation to learner performance. In particular, the study did not look at how differences in learning styles, socio-economics, race and language were considered when assessing and evaluating learners.

From a methodological perspective, the study was mindful that the responses of the participants could have been influenced by the position of the researcher, known to the participants as an official of the Western Cape Education Department. Furthermore, the study focused on what the teachers said they did, classroom observations were not employed.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework for the study was critical theory, critical multi-culturalism and social justice (Giroux,1988; McLaren, 1989; May, 1999; Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Pendlebury, 2004; Hemson, 2006). An understanding of these concepts was central to the discussion on curriculum development and classroom practice in a context of diversity. The concepts are useful for this study in that they critically challenge the social power relations that are deeply embedded in the traditions of teaching and the need to transform social inequalities and injustice.

The approach was qualitative and the sample included 50 primary school teachers. 43 of these were in-service teachers studying at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The teachers were part of an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) course offered at the university and constituted a group of only primary school teachers studying Barriers to Learning. Primary school teachers were selected as they have a more general and holistic approach to learning compared to their colleagues offering the more specialised and fragmented high school curriculum. In addition they were selected because their experiences would be characterised by apartheid policies and they were now faced with the challenge of dealing with diverse classroom communities. In addition to the 43 teachers on the ACE programme, a group of 7 primary school teachers who meet regularly as colleagues and friends were included as key informants to the study. They were chosen because of their interest in the topic and therefore their ability to enhance the investigation.

Furthermore, primary school teachers were chosen as the target group because primary schools are fundamental in any current educational system since the children's mould is formed in these early years. The

sample group had been exposed to both Curriculum 2005 and the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) of the National Department of Education (DoE).

Data gathering sessions included a questionnaire administered with the group of fifty teachers, followed by in-depth individual interviews with ten teachers, as well as a focus group session with five teachers from the overall sample of fifty teachers. The teachers were asked what they understood by the concept of diversity and how they dealt with diversity in the classroom. This triangulatory process and the "digging deeper" approach culminated in the collection of rich data that was organised and analysed according to categories and themes.

1.7   OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter Two begins with a critical analysis of the literature on diversity and offers the theoretical orientation of the study. Chapter Three describes the research design and methodological issues relating to conducting this research.

In Chapter Four, Five and Six the data gathered is presented. Chapter Seven offers some further analysis while Chapter Eight presents the implications developed. It outlines a set of recommendations that have been derived from this study and highlights areas of research that need further investigation.

CHAPTER TWO
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This literature review aims to explore what has been documented in dealing with diversity in the classroom. It is done in order to establish what is known about teachers' understanding of diversity and the issues they deal with in a classroom setting.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of research in the area of diversity in education both in the United States of America (USA) and South Africa (SA). It should be noted that most of the research on diversity in education comes from the USA, which has a context different to that of South Africa. There is still a need for more South African specific studies that take into account the diverse and contextual issues in South Africa.

This is followed by a discussion on the social manifestation of diversity in South Africa. The next section explores critical theory and critical multiculturalism and records concepts and terminology (social reconstructionist approach, multicultural education and equal opportunity, cultural pluralism, cultural diversity, social justice, inclusion/ exclusion and learning styles) relevant to this study. It also reviews some teachers' perceptions and strategies for dealing with diversity and finally locates the research question within the policy framework for diversity education in South Africa.

Various understandings of the concept of diversity exist, highlighting that the concept is widely contested. This study looks at a wide range of issues in diversity and like Hemson (2006), argues for "an approach to diversity

that is open not only to the myriad forms of diversity but crucially to the complex ways in which diversity becomes the opportunity for challenging imbalances of power, and for a research approach that strengthens the processes of change" (Hemson, 2006, p67). The different interpretations can translate into different aims and strategies for diversity classroom practice. The discussion in this chapter offers a framework for understanding the practices of dealing with diversity in the classroom by the primary school teachers in this study.

2.2   REVIEWING RESEARCH ON DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

This section looks at research conducted in the field of diversity issues in relation to classroom and schools. It draws mainly from research conducted in the United States of America, which has a rich historical and legislative development in the area of multicultural education. In South Africa, while there are some such studies, not much attention has been given to how classroom teachers deal with diversity, despite the many challenges facing the teacher in the post-apartheid era.

Studies conducted in South Africa are mainly drawn from research projects (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999; Nkomo, McKinney and Chisholm, 2004; Nkomo and Vandeyar, 2008) and scholars such as Moletsane (1999), Hemson (2006) and Robinson and Zinn (2007). Their research questions offered a frame for exploring this study. This study was not only interested in how the teachers were viewing and recognising differences, but also at how they planned their lessons to address social injustices.

2.2.1 Segregation and desegregation

Research on diversity in the classroom has been focused on mainly in the USA. Most of the research conducted in the USA during the 1970s

investigated the policy of desegregation and not integration with a focus on conditions of equal status and respect within schools. Recent surveys from the USA have shown that both white and minority students in integrated school districts tend to report that they have learned to study and work together, developing confidence and skills to work in such settings (Gurin, 2002).

Statistics produced by the National Center for Education Statistics in the USA in 2000 indicate that well implemented desegregation policies have a variety of important benefits for students and the American society. It also shows that segregated schools perform worse on average but acknowledges that while it is a feasible and valuable policy, school desegregation cannot resolve all the inequalities of a society. In the American 1999 Gallup poll, Americans showed strong support for their children to learn about how to deal with diversity and more than two thirds (68%) of Americans polled thought that desegregation had improved black education and 50% that it improved schooling of whites. Fifty nine percent (59%) said that more should be done to introduce integrated schools.

Data from the American National Center of Education Statistics (NCES, 2000) also showed that the number of minority teachers (teachers of colour) nationwide is not representative of the number of minority students (students of colour). It showed that in 2001/02, 60% of public students were white, 17% black, 17% Hispanic, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander and 1% American Indian/Alaskan. In contrast, 2001 data showed that 90% of public school teachers were white, 6% black, and fewer than 5% of other races. Furthermore, statistical projections show that while the percentage of students of colour in public schools is expected to increase, the percentage of teachers of colour is not expected to rise.

According to research on the benefits of desegregation and diversity, Gurin (2002) cites that a racially and ethnically diverse student body has significant benefits for all students, including minorities. Her findings showed that students learn better in a diverse environment, a point also echoed by others (Cushner et al, 1992; Stevens and George, 1992; Delpit, 1995; Wolfe and Spencer, 1996; Yon, 2000), and are better prepared to become active participants in a pluralistic, democratic society once they leave school. Supporting desegregation, Hones (2002) citing Plank's research on social changes and desegregated classrooms illustrates that it does lead to improvement in interpersonal relations. The study also draws attention to certain teaching styles and curricular practices that will either enhance or inhibit improved relations among students. Plank's work builds on research done by Grant and Sleeter (1997) who showed that curriculum interventions addressing racial and gender stereotyping make a difference and that they contribute to a positive change in terms of attitude and behaviour. Lunderberg (1997) also looked at attitude in terms of gender issues, investigating the subtle and overt stereotypes in the classroom, and like Banks (1995) recommends that teachers use well-designed curricular interventions and material, and pay attention to the impact of the interventions in order to make the necessary adjustments.

2.2.2 Teacher preparedness for diversity

Looking at the preparedness of teachers, Ladson-Billings (2001) in a qualitative study with eight novice teachers working in urban elementary school settings highlighted the following themes: cultural pedagogy, culture and cultural competence and socio-political consciousness. She found that prospective teachers working in diverse communities need the chance to learn about the students in the context of the community, to apprentice with skilled co-operating teachers, to ask lots of questions about teaching and to do serious intellectual work.

Her research is supported by Delpit (1995) and Gay (2000) who also show that teachers enter the profession with little preparation for working with children who differ from them racially, culturally and economically and they need to be capacitated in order to deal with diverse backgrounds of the students (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000). Furthermore, Delpit (1995) contends that the classroom is a dynamic environment with many factors that should be considered when dealing with "other people's children".

Research projects looking at ways to strengthen teachers' capacity in the USA to deal with the various factors of diverse communities (Hill, Phelps and Friedland, 2007) revealed that gaining experiences in communities other than one's own helps teachers to consider students' cultural background and their academic knowledge when planning for diverse classroom settings. The projects also illuminated that deeper reflection on classroom practice is a critical aspect in the process of planning.

While the studies generally confirm that diversity can enhance the learning experiences of all students, Wolfe and Spencer's (1996) investigation on achievement, success and minorities alerts to the notion of inclusion. They found that the factors that influence their success were inclusion, self-esteem, and not the availability of resources that characterise predominantly white institutions. According to Wolfe and Spencer (1996), access to resources for non-white and minority groups in predominantly white institutions, is not equivalent to inclusion. They purport that the negative environment experienced by students negates the advantage of access. This may be used conversely by some as proof to promote segregated education but the research claims that the level of acceptance that a scholar experiences in a learning environment affects academic success. Reporting on a study by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) in the District Columbia, USA in a high school Jacobs (1995) states that African-

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American students often felt that those doing well were "acting white". They saw schooling as diminishing an African-American person's cultural identity rather than fostering intellectual growth.

Having information on the background, language, history and culture of students is a valuable resource for teaching. It assists with the making of pedagogical decisions and offers the teacher a lens through which to view and support the child, parents and the home. According to Field and Aebersold (1990), another classroom factor to be considered is the extent to which the literacy tradition of the home and culture closely resembles that of the school. If there is a strong emphasis in the culture on the oral tradition, then knowledge may be transmitted through "verbal usage and memorisation" as in the cases of Moroccan and Western Samaon cultures (Field and Aebersold, 1990). It is argued that it is different from the highly literate tradition in the United States and presents problems if the teachers expect certain types of classroom interaction based on reading texts. Jacobs (1995) reports that reflecting on classroom lessons and modifying instruction facilitates higher-level performance as observed in working with Hispanic students during English Language lessons.

Reflecting on a study looking at the understanding of Language Policy in the USA, Fox (2004) reports that many teachers are not aware of language policy statements. She reports that white classroom teachers insist that children should be exposed to standard English at home, while teachers of colour, compared to their white counterparts, overwhelmingly supported classroom use of diverse dialects and languages other than English. The varied interpretation of polices impacts on the learners' learning processes.

According to Banks and Banks (1989) and Banks (1995) many marginalized groups have educational experiences where they suffered as

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a result of negative social, economic and educational polices. They purport that practices such as referral of these students in disproportionate numbers to special education classes still continues. Their study drew attention to the notion that having additional information on students assists with the gaps and enables teachers to provide the appropriate instruction and seek the required assistance.

In a study conducted in New Zealand by Wilkinson (1998) investigating the factors associated with the gaps in the reading literacy profiles of primary school children, the findings showed that teachers who have the capacity to handle diversity are able to close the home language gaps among students. It also drew attention to the value of having good teaching practices and of having social and economic conditions that permit school and home environments to foster a literate culture.

2.2.3 Teaching strategies

As an approach to responding to the needs of the students, Ladson-Billings (1990), and Gay (2000) suggest a "culturally responsive teaching" approach. Culturally responsive teaching does not incorporate traditional educational practices with respect to students of colour; it means respecting cultures and using the experiences of various groups as meaningful resources for teaching and learning (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Ball 2000; Gay, 2000). The studies show that promoting an academic community of learners creates a sense of belonging, shows respect for human dignity and promotes the individual's self-concept. The approach promotes the modification of traditional direct instruction to include other types of instruction, approaches and teaching styles in order to offer all students just educational opportunities.

Focussing on learning styles, research by Grant and Sleeter (1997) showed that "learning gets turned off" when teachers tend to overlook their students' identities and experiences and teach as if the students were like themselves. The researchers termed this ineffective teaching approach "business as usual". When teaching styles conflict with students' learning styles, limited or no learning occurs, says Brown (2003). The findings show that an instructional paradigm shift is needed to move from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred curriculum. The point is made that where success is not being experienced through a teacher-centred approach, learner centeredness as a model is suggested for dealing with the challenges of diverse learners.

As observed, the teaching style was based mainly on the teacher while students listened, relying on the linguistic and logical–mathematical intelligence (Gardner, 1999). It was observed that teachers very seldom varied their teaching styles (Gardner, 1999; Grant and Sleeter, 1997) to accommodate individual learning styles, skills and abilities. Their findings also show how understanding the cultural background of learners (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001) assists teachers in investigating the learning style preferences of students, while cautioning about making generalisations. The diversity classroom management challenge is to inculcate an approach that is sensitive to varied teaching modalities and not devalue and repress groups along ethnic, culture, class, race, gender and ability lines (Delpit, 1995). While some argue for the matching of learning style and instructional style, others suggest that teachers appeal to the diversity of learning style using different forms of instruction.

In studies specific to religion and education, the Warwick religion education project in England revealed that an interpretative approach (critiquing and reflecting) helped children and young people to find their own positions within the key debates about religious plurality (Jackson,

2005). Parallel with this work, the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (ICRSA) experimented with the approach and showed that the method offered sound portrayal of African religion through the notion of oral tradition (Jackson, 2005, citing Kwenda, Mndede and Stonier, 1997).

Further to this, Jackson (2005), looking at Ipgrave's (2002) dialogic approach, argues that the personal knowledge and experience that young people bring to the classroom provide important data for study, communication and reflection. In her research on the inter-faith influence of children from the Muslim, Hindu and Christian backgrounds in her multicultural primary school in the city of Leicester, she highlights the children's readiness to engage with religious questions and their ability to utilise religious language encountered through interacting with children in school. Her findings show that the dialogic approach raises children's self-esteem and provides opportunities to develop critical skills. Ipgrave (2002) contends that the dialogic approach allows underachievers to express themselves and generates a climate of moral seriousness when engaging in discussion on basic human questions.

Research on other school interventions in relation to diversity, such as lowering class size also suggests that school policies have larger potential impacts on low-income students. Most desegregation plans in the USA avoided putting white children in concentrated poverty schools with large non-white majorities and those that did, tended to lose most of the white students. Further projects studying the effects of poverty revealed that many students who did not succeed at schools were from impoverished backgrounds that were not always understood by the teacher. The findings highlighted lack of financial power and resources as factors that influence the teaching environment and show that poverty crosses ethnic and geographical boundaries (Lyon, 2006). Ball (2000), who in her

studies worked with both South African teachers and those from the USA on preparing teachers for diversity, echoes this finding and reveals the need for the development and support of teachers who are preparing to teach the poor, marginalised and underachieving population.

2.2.4 Racial integration in South African schools

Within South Africa, while research in the area of diversity is receiving attention, few studies directly explore how teachers deal with classroom diversity. Some relevant literature includes the Education Initiative Research Project (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999) and a publication based on a colloquium organised by the Human Sciences Research Council (Nkomo, McKinney and Chisholm, 2004). The research project articulates some findings on classroom practice in relation to language and learning style while the colloquium publication provides a set of papers reflecting on the issues around school race integration; both are useful for this research question. Other studies providing a frame examined teacher preparation for diversity, (Hemson, 2006; Robinson and Zinn, 2007).

Data gained in 1997 on racial integration for seven provinces showed that about 22 000, or 5,4% of the 400 000 learners in mainly white schools (defined as those with more than 70% white learners) were blacks. In "mixed" schools (where no race group constituted more than 70% of learners), 197 000 out of the 400 000 (40.3%) were black, and 104 000 (21.3%) white. Former Indian Schools had the greatest number of blacks: 15 000 or 15.2% were black pupils. Nevertheless, most black pupils (95.8%) were still in schools that were predominantly black.

The statistics suggest that the former Model C schools (schools formerly classified as white and who were allowed to admit children of other races) are facing the challenge of integration, because black learners are looking

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for quality education. This may also be the case at some schools in former coloured townships in Cape Town, as they have admitted an increasing number of black learners from communities within the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. A survey conducted by the International Marketing Council (IMC) of South Africa in 2006 found that posh Model C accents and fancy cars are symbols of upward mobility among South African youth.

It must, however, be noted that the extent of racial integration has been welcomed by a wide spectrum of opinion. The "desegregation" policy of the new democratic government allows parents choice regarding selection of schools for their children. Reports show that migration from historically disadvantaged schools to ex-Model C schools (formerly white schools) has grown since the ushering in of democracy in South Africa in 1994. It should be noted that desegregated patterns had begun since 1990 influenced by the so-called Clase models. In the context of dwindling enrolments, white schools were given the option of privatising (Model A), becoming a state school (Model B), a semi – private school in which the state paid teacher salaries and school communities the other costs (Model C), or to remain as they were and continue as state-aided schools (Model D). Whatever the model chosen, schools had to remain 51% white and the cultural ethos of the school needed to remain intact (Chisholm, 2008).

The South African Schools Act (1996) did away with these models but the Model C financing and governance model established precedents. The funding model reinforced privilege, albeit on the basis not of race but class. According to Chisholm (2008), the shadow of privilege is reflected in the fact that former white schools are still referred to as Model C schools, the option that the majority of school governing bodies chose in 1990.

The legacy of apartheid education has seen schools struggle to break away from the grip of oppression and dehumanization with learners particularly from disadvantaged communities struggling for recognition. As quality education (associated with resources) is seen as a gateway to success and increasingly better opportunities many learners from former disadvantaged schools and communities have migrated to former model C schools.

Further studies conducted by the Gauteng Education Department in 2002 to track racial representivity, used learner enrolment and educator statistics. An analysis of the 2001 data from the national Education Management Information System (EMIS) by Sujee (2003) confirmed that there was more integration of African learners into schools previously defined Indian and coloured than into white schools. Schools previously defined as white remained 59% to 70% white with variations between provinces. Results from the Western Cape revealed that many also preferred the classification "other" rather than black, coloured, Asian or white (HSRC Review, 2005). The research showed that at a macro level enrolment of learners at schools appears to be deracialised to a large degree in most schools and to a lesser degree in certain schools where there are impediments, such as the language of learning and teaching used.

The study by Sujee (2003) indicated that there is more deracialisation of schools charging higher fees like the English medium schools of the former Transvaal Education Department (TED) compared to schools in which the language of learning and teaching is Afrikaans (Nkomo et al, 2004).

According to the research, learners from the former House of Delegates (HOD, former indian) schools are the most mobile group in terms of

integration, with deracialisation occurring more among learners than among educators and boards of governors. The findings of the study show that the exclusivity of the apartheid design has been broken down in most schools in Gauteng. However, the population demographics are such that single race schools, especially among the poor, still exist (Nkomo et al, 2004), with recent research showing that different forms of exclusion and racism still exist in the education system and in schools in particular (Vally and Dalamba, 1999; Soudien, 2004; Chisholm and Sujee, 2006).

In a survey of 44 schools in Gauteng, South Africa, Grobler et al (2006) investigated what factors impact upon the successful creation of a school environment for the effective management of cultural diversity. They found that schools that are culturally diverse are of the opinion that through creative approaches they are able to deal with the management of cultural diversity. Grobler et al (2006) furthermore found that managing cultural diversity is complicated by communication problems and stereotyping due to differences based on moral, socio-political and economic issues.

Although there is increasing learner diversity within schools, the continued lack of diversity among teaching staff as seen in the rapidly integrating former Model C schools is still evident. These schools were granted special permission by the apartheid government to be sanctioned by the white parent body of the school to allow children of colour to be enrolled at the school. The study by Hemson (2006) on staff composition and learner population in terms of race revealed unevenness of development and that the staff and student composition by and large reflect the racial composition of the institution during the apartheid era. In some cases the learner population at some former Model C schools have become predominantly black (coloured, xhosa speaking, indian).

2.2.5 Teaching strategies in South Africa

Hemson (2006) investigated the preparation of teachers for integrated schools. His findings suggest that teacher education is utilising strategies that reinforce unequal power relations, which in turn perpetuate discrimination and exclusion in society and schools. He suggests intervention at three levels: developing the institutional culture; changing the teaching practice experience; and revamping the teacher education curriculum. Robinson and Zinn (2007) who investigated teacher preparation for diversity showed that attempts are being made to prepare future classroom teachers for diversity in a variety of ways.

Researching learning and teaching styles, Wright (1998) showed that learners have different learning styles but in spite of their learning styles, the predominant mode of presentation is still "talk and chalk" with few teachers in the study using varied modes of teaching. In another investigation into teaching and learning strategies Bell (1997) and Dach (1999) showed that teachers managed their large classes and group work by arranging the learners into small groups yet continued to teach in the traditional manner – "teacher talk" – also revealing an initial lack of understanding of group-work. Dach (1999) concluded that good classroom management, meaningful learning material and resources are crucial to teaching in large classes.

Research by Pile and Smythe (1999) observed significant contradictions between what individual teachers said about how they thought children learn and the classroom practices of the teachers. For example, although teachers stated that they employed the discovery approach in teaching, observations showed that the methods the teachers pursued in the classroom were quite the opposite, and in fact exclusive whole class teaching occurred. While they accepted the desirability of learner-centred

pedagogy and the different modality approach, indications are that they are unable to or seldom practise it.

Looking at the area of language, classroom-based research commissioned for the President's Education Initiative suggests that few schools are implementing the Department of Education's Language in Education policy which includes stating how the school will promote multilingualism through a variety of measures. Although the reasons are complex, it is argued that the most important reason is that the development and implementation of the policy has been devolved to school level where existing practices and realities of schools and classrooms tend to militate against the implementation of the policy advocated by government (Brown, 1998; Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999; Murray, 1999).

Furthermore, the Project for the study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) report claims that school language policies have evolved from realities on the ground such as staff language proficiency and parental preference for high status languages. According to PRAESA, primary schools in the townships in the Western Capes confirmed a drift towards the use of English – "the earlier the better". This is further influenced by the perceptions of the value of English as the language of socio-economic power and mobility (Setati, 1999; PRAESA, 1999).

In another study, Setati and Adler (2000) illuminate the complexity of code-switching in multilingual mathematics classrooms. They found that learning and teaching mathematics in a bilingual/multilingual classroom where the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is not the learners' main language is complicated. They claim that mathematics teachers have a dual challenge since they have to teach both the language of

mathematics and English at the same time in a context where pressure to access and acquire English is enormous.

Another recent study in the Western Cape, specific to language and literacy, points to a correlation with poverty and race. The study conducted on Grade 3 and 6 learners reveal that at Grade 3 level, 37% were reading at Grade 3 level; 41% at grade 2 level; 12% at grade 1 level and 10% below grade 1. At grade 6, 8% were reading way below grade 3 level; 18% at grade 3 level; 19% at grade 4 level; 21% at grade 5 and 35% at grade 6 level. The poor results were mainly recorded in schools labelled disadvantaged and poor. (Human Capital Development Strategy for the Western Cape, 2006).

Researching school religion policy, Weisse (2005) in testing the opinions of the Dutch Reform Church (DRC), but more specifically students aligned to the church, presented both an increasing willingness to open up to diversity and a line of thought that leans towards isolation and disrespect of other religions.

The studies done in South Africa support the view that classrooms are subject to many outside influences and contextual factors and remind us that the issues of diversity are inextricably linked to larger issues of power relations in both education and society at large.

The following section of the chapter deals with the theoretical framework and the key concepts linked to diversity in education.

2.3 KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

The concepts of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1989) exert much influence in a socio-political context like South Africa which is still challenged with the legacy of apartheid's forms of oppression. As political change is the backdrop, critical pedagogy (further elaborated on in this section) framed the orientation of this study as the concepts appeared to have a bearing on the underlying intentions of the study, namely to understand how teachers deal with diversity in their classrooms and schools. Do they show critical awareness of their own school and classroom practice? The assumption is made that in the light of the strong social justice approach underpinning the new curriculum in South Africa, critical pedagogy would inform classroom practice.

Other approaches to framing diversity relevant to the study included a cluster of concepts. The term multiculturalism is used as one that recognises differences. It can be approached in a more critical way by also relating issues of race, socio-economic status, language, culture, religion to issues of structural inequalities, hence the term critical-multiculturalism (May, 1999), later elaborated upon. A more preferred framework for this study is social justice. This framework includes concepts such as inclusivity, equal opportunity, varied learning abilities and social reconstruction.

Since the nature of this research encompasses a variety of practices and orientations it would be too limiting to adhere to only one or two concepts. Others relevant to this study include *social reconstructionist, cultural pluralism, inclusion/exclusion and learning styles*. An understanding of these concepts is central to the discussion on curriculum development and classroom practice in a context of diversity and social justice. The concepts are useful for this study in that they challenge social power

relations deeply embedded in the traditions of teaching; they also relate directly to the need to counteract and, where possible, overcome social inequalities and injustice. The focus is on a wide range of issues in diversity and not just reduced to the recognition and celebration of differences. It recollects the dominancy of certain groups to articulate their interests and practices in relation to others, especially those previously oppressed. Thus, the nature of the relations amongst different social groups is being dealt with, cognisant of power imbalances and the need for change.

The section below discusses a range of overlapping concepts, all within a similar frame of reference. Although a fairly wide range of terminology is used, the underlying concepts all relate to issues of diversity in the context of social change.

2.3.1 Critical theory/pedagogy

Schools are regarded as prime sites for the reproduction of broader social imbalances like social inequalities, but are also main sites for social and curriculum reconstruction. This tension within the discourse on the purpose of schooling has concerned many theorists who have located education and the issue of diversity within the broader political debate. It therefore challenges schools to make political decisions related to education. Critical pedagogy is about empowering the powerless and transforming existing social inequalities and injustice. It attempts to provide teachers with a better means of understanding the contributions which schools offer with regard to the perceptions of race, class and gender division (Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1989). It challenges teachers to look at the complexity of diversity in a manner that will transform the classroom so that it is ensured that all learners feel included and empowered in the process of learning. Critical theory offers teachers the

space within which to critically view the labels that either include or exclude learners from the broader education arena.

A critical theory framework was useful to this research in that it offered the conceptual pedagogical space for a social justice curriculum that encourages the value of diversity practices in classrooms and schools. By establishing teachers' understanding of diversity, and by encouraging them to reflect on the issues, the research hoped to identify strategies for classroom practice.

The issues of diversity should be understood within a socio-political context. Giroux utilising Freire's work states that:

> Education becomes a form of action that joins the language of critique and possibility. It represents, finally, the need for a passionate commitment by educators to make the pedagogical more political, that is, to make critical reflection and action fundamental parts of a social project that not only engages forms of oppression but develops a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to humanize life itself (Giroux, 1988: 160).

Grundy (1987) also proposes action that attempts to change the structure within which learning occurs and which constrain freedom in often unrecognised ways. The guiding ethics of what embodies the social and political ideals of freedom, equality and justice resonate with critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is based on empowering the powerless and transforming existing social inequalities and injustice. Critical theorists argue that it is imperative for teachers to understand the important role which schooling plays in joining knowledge and power, and its impact on the development of critical and competent citizens (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1987;Giroux, 1988; Mclaren, 1989).

Critical pedagogy provides educators with a better means of understanding the contributions which schools offer with regard to perceptions of diversity in society. In addition, it highlights and questions inequalities. A critical pedagogical approach to classroom practice will lead to the acceptance of the notion of social justice as prescribed by education policy. Educators should "dismantle and rearrange the artificial rules and codes that make up classroom reality" (McLaren, 1989). In dealing with the issue of diversity, the school and classroom must be fundamentally tied to a struggle for a qualitatively better life for all, based on non-exploitative relations and social justice.

Therefore, the challenge for teachers in the classroom is to recognise exclusive practices in the classroom of which educators themselves may not always be aware. Recognising the existence of such practices should then become the first step towards transforming classroom behaviour. McLaren (1989) poses the question, "How have certain pedagogical practices become so habitual or natural in school settings that teachers accept them as normal, unproblematic, and expected?" Through looking at their pedagogy in relation to diversity, teachers should recognise that education cannot be divorced from the socio-political structures that influence the nature of education (Freire, 1987). Education does not stand in isolation from the rest of society. It is ideologically and structurally interdependent with other social systems within society.

The following questions therefore become important: "What kind of politics am I practising in the classroom? In whose interest am I a teacher?" (Freire,1987). In asking these questions in relation to diversity, the teacher will not just implement the interests constructed by people external to the actual experience of his or her classroom and student interest (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1987). Giroux (1988) further states that schools establish the conditions under which others live, resist and participate in the

construction of their own identities and subjectivities. Since the most significant interactions in the school take place in the classroom, these conditions are important as schools, and more specifically teachers, are crucial in supporting and promoting diversity at schools.

Goduka (1999) states that educators in South Africa should be in tune with new developments and need to ask what opportunities these political, educational and cultural developments provide for them and the learners. "Do these developments provide white educators with the opportunities to begin the journey from dominant social power to an understanding of diversity? Do these developments provide opportunities for indigenous educators to affirm and validate their cultural identity and cultural voice? Can they become cultural awakeners and healers for all learners, and for the indigenous learners in particular, whom the previous regime rendered silent?" (Goduka,1999, p96). Furthermore she argues that it is crucial for those who were advantaged and privileged to acknowledge that their cultural dominance was at the expense of the indigenous culture. But forming a collective with the apartheid "silent voices" to affirm diversity and rally against varied forms of oppression remains a challenge (Goduka, 1999).

Such a process is important as the previous educational system did not prepare privileged or oppressed learners to function and live successfully in a diverse society and the implications of this for all South African learners should be recognised. Under apartheid the oppressive ideologies were deeply embedded in the education system. These ideologies were used to determine what was taught and by whom, and also dictated the distribution of power and resources among the racial groups in the school system and the broader society (Goduka, 1999). Redressing the past and thus curbing privileges is an intervention critical to this process. In all of this, the most disadvantaged and poor whose social, economic and

political discrimination placed them at an educational disadvantage and at risk, should receive focused consideration.

Concerns about the present system of education cannot be addressed without an analysis of the previous political and educational system. In education, sustained patterns of segregation and racially based unequal provisions resulted in gross inequalities between whites and other racial groups. Therefore there is a critical need to develop some theoretical framework for redress that promotes diversity practices in the curriculum and the learning environment (Goduka, 1999).

The concepts of critical pedagogy exert great influence in a social context characterised by forms of power imbalances. It is within this context that the work of Freire (1987), Giroux (1988), and McLaren (1989) is considered as a basis for understanding and analysing how teachers deal with diversity in the classroom and for providing "a politics of hope, a language of possibility and morality" (Giroux, 1988). Although critical pedagogy is considered as the framework, it should be recorded that it cannot be assumed that this is what informs the practice of teachers, even within a social context where one might expect it to be so. Critical pedagogy can be viewed as a pedagogy that supports diversity in the classroom and as the framework to engage the learners in the examination of the oppressive features of the education system. It also aims to obstruct prevailing ideological and social practices such as racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination which assume that some individuals are inherently inferior (Goduka, 1999). Drawing on Giroux (1991), pedagogy is defined not just simply about something that happens at schools; rather it refers to forms of cultural production that are inextricably historical and political. Pedagogy is a technological process of power, language and practices which construct and offer human beings particular views of themselves and the world.

Giroux (1988) further elaborates that learners and teachers should learn to understand the transformative possibilities of their own experiences. The notion of the teachers as transformative intellectuals who engage in critical teaching for social change to counter-hegemonic activities is expressed. This should be made possible when the classroom programmes are contextually relevant and culturally sensitive – providing curricula that resonate with the life experiences of learners (Goduka, 1999). Critical pedagogy provides for the politics of hope and the discourse of possibility and morality (Giroux, 1988). The experiences should be critically examined against the backdrop of the political history of South Africa.

Various critiques have been offered of critical pedagogy. These centre mainly on what is seen as incapacity to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and an inability to offer practitioners directions for action (Robinson, 2000). Ellsworth (1989), for example, has criticised the high level of abstraction of many writings, and has argued that the language is more suited to philosophical debate than to classroom practice. Ellsworth (1989) argues that the theory offered by critical pedagogy does not provide enough guidance for daily educational activities. This is where this study hopes to make a contribution, in that it looks at the relationships between teachers' conceptual understanding and taking action in a practical way.

2.3.2 Critical multi-culturalism

Moletsane (1999) cites Grant and Sleeter (1992) who argue for a critical approach when dealing with curriculum. They suggest that a social reconstructionist or transformative approach to multiculturalism be considered. This chapter also looks at concepts such as multicultural

education, social justice, inclusivity, learning styles, equal opportunities and cultural pluralism as aspects of the discussions linked to the notion of critical multiculturalism.

Moletsane (1999) argued that a critical-multiculturalism approach aims to prepare all learners to become analytical and critical about their life circumstances and the social power relationships and stratifications that keep them oppressed or privileged at the expense of others. The term multiculturalism may be seen as a guise to promote apartheid divisions by those who see in it an apparent acknowledgment of human diversity while simultaneously silencing the issues of power relations that are intrinsically caught up in human difference. Soudien, Carrim and Sayed, (2004), further argue for a critical approach to dealing with issues of diversity. The critical approach highlighted the challenges that still exist in relation to dealing with diversity in an education system still punctuated with socio-political and socio-economic imbalances.

Although writers such as Sleeter and Grant (1994) and Sleeter and McLaren (1995) use the concept multiculturalism, the approach is critical. They relate issues of race, culture and language to issues of structural inequalities (Hemson et al, 2003). This approach is known as "critical multiculturalism or critical antiracism" (Carrim, 1999; May, 1999). Sleeter and McLaren (1995) argue that it is important to locate multicultural education within the struggle for socio-political power and economic integration.

May (1999) argues that multi-culturalism has had largely negligible impact on the life chances of students, the racialised attitudes of students, the inherent mono-culturalism of school practices and the wider processes of power relations that exist in education. The traditional form of multi-culturalism failed to ameliorate and contest the wider patterns of racial

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discrimination and myriad forms of disadvantages faced by students. Through the notion of critical multi-culturalism attention has shifted towards challenging broader structural questions of oppression and offering the space for all to be included in the process.

The significant influence of critical pedagogy has provided a radical, anti-discriminatory conception to critical multi-culturalism linked with addressing wider issues of socio – economic and political inequality. In so doing, dominant forms of ethnicity usually made "invisible" in discussions of multi-culturalism are exposed.

May (1999) further states that critical pedagogy has been criticised for the inability to relate the espoused critical theory into meaningful practice. It is contended that while multi-culturalism may be challenged, it at least could be applied programmatically in schools. May (1999) purports that despite the critiques, critical multi–culturalism with its radical education politics of social justice can somehow still make a difference in schools.

Like Sleeter and McLaren (1995), May (1999) suggests that critical multi-culturalism should be central to all educational activity as it incorporates conceptions and analysis of culture while holding onto the possibility of an emancipatory politics. He however acknowledges the limits of critical multi–cultural education which cannot compensate for society but nevertheless offers a crucial doorway of hope.

The issue of naming the phenomenon of diversity, according to Hemson et al (2003) may seem insignificant, given that the frameworks suggested all recognise the nature of power imbalances and the need for change articulated by critical pedagogy. This, according to Waghid (2004), is also the basis of the human rights framework and citizenship education, which is part of social justice education (Hemson et al, 2003). Kumashiro

(2003), working in the field of diversity and social justice pedagogy on the other hand, presents a framework that assumes an emancipatory commitment and suggests programmes that give attention to the needs of groups that are oppressed or marginalised and in turn contribute to a socially just and democratic society. According to Kumashiro (2003), the approach should be one that is critical of privileging and othering, which theorises directly about oppression, and teaches how to be critical and to take action against oppression.

2.3.3 Social reconstructionist approach

The social reconstructionist approach is presented by Liston and Zeichner (1991) who, offer four distinct traditions in teacher education. The first, the academic tradition, emphasises the teacher's role as a scholar and subject matter specialist. The second, the social–efficiency tradition, emphasises the acquisition of specific and observable skills of teaching that are assumed to be related to pupil learning. Performance is here assumed to be the most valid measure of teaching competence. Thirdly, the developmentalist tradition has its roots in the child study movement and is based on the assumption that the natural order of the development of the learner provides the basis for determining what should be taught, both to pupils and to their teachers.

The fourth tradition, the social–reconstructionist tradition, defines schooling and teacher education as crucial elements in a movement towards a more just society. The approach suggests that programmes be linked by the common desire to prepare teachers who have critical perspectives on the relationship between schooling and societal inequities and a moral commitment to correcting those inequities through their daily classroom and school activities (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p33).

In addition to acquiring knowledge bases for engaging with diversity, teachers should become social reconstructionists – a process used to empower oppressed groups and for teachers to become social agents of change (Goduka, 1999). She claims that this position is supported through the works of Aronowitz and Giroux (1987) who argued for a language of possibilities, by Freire (1970) through his approach called conscientization, emancipatory pedagogy (Lather, 1991) and critical teaching (Shor, 1980). This approach is also supported by Sleeter and Grant (1994) who argue for an examining of inequalities in classrooms and schools and the involvement in addressing social issues.

2.3.4 Multi-cultural education and equal opportunity

James Banks, one of the pioneers of multicultural education was among the first education scholars to examine schools as social systems from a multicultural context (1981). He framed his understanding within the idea of "educational equality", which meant that all aspects of the school, including policies, teachers' attitudes, instructional material, assessment methods, counselling and teaching styles had to be examined and where necessary transformed. Building on Bank's work, deeper frameworks were later developed by Carl Grant and Christine Sleeter. These were rooted in the ideal of equal educational opportunity and a connection between school transformation and social change. The multicultural education approach suggests the reform of the entire classroom and the school itself (Grant and Sleeter, 1997). The approach is based on the ideal of equal opportunity and cultural pluralism. Equal opportunity promotes the idea that all learners should be given equal opportunity to learn and succeed, with full affirmation of his/her sex, race, social class background, sexual orientation and disability. It does not ignore differences but views differences as normal and desirable – a learning opportunity. This approach, according to Grant and Sleeter (1997), should be supported

where difference is not viewed as separatism, but rather as a sharing and blending of different ethnic cultures and other forms of culture while supporting other groups as they continue to develop distinctive group cultures. This therefore prompted scholars of multicultural education to refocus the struggle on developing new approaches and models of education and learning which are built on a foundation of social justice, critical thinking and equal opportunity. The approach is further informed by emerging conceptualisations of multicultural education and cultural diversity which stress that the work must be understood in relation to the social and political structures that control education (Gorski, 1999).

Through education, according to Banks (1995), cultural diversity is expected to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social class and cultural groups, thereby helping all students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills. This is needed for them to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate and communicate with people from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good of all. This should be supported to ensure that all are able to realise their full potential (Grant and Sleeter, 1997).

The discussion informing the process related to the position offered by Grant and Sleeter (1997), who suggest that the classroom should become more concerned with human diversity, choice and equal opportunity is embraced by the current education polices in South Africa. However, in many schools especially former white and coloured schools, learners of other groups, especially black learners, have few opportunities to display their culture as a process of assimilation frames these schools. Robertson (2005) cites authors such as Finnemore (1996), Vally and Dalamba (1999), Dolby (2000) and Klass (2004) who show that historically white schools have some way to go before all South African learners are equally

affirmed and/or respected. Hoadley (1999) citing Tikly and Mabogoane (1994) claims that geographical, linguistic, social class and economic factors continue to exclude the majority of black children from more privileged schools such as House of Assembly schools.

The multicultural approach rests on two ideals: equal opportunity and cultural pluralism (Grant and Sleeter, 1997). The ideal of equal opportunity holds that each student should be given equal opportunity to learn, succeed and become what he or she would like to be with full affirmation of his or her sex, race, social class background, sexual orientation and disability. Grant and Sleeter (1997), state that equal opportunity does not just happen; one should work deliberately and consistently to implement it. Equal opportunity does not mean ignoring differences or pretending that they do not exist. "I experience the different attitudes of people towards a white child and a black child," was an opinion expressed by a teacher in this study who taught in a township school and is now employed at a former Model C school. "I can just feel and can pick up that some white teachers think differently of other children, teachers and schools that are not white." The perceived prejudices, stereotypes and sense of superiority reinforce the discriminatory practices and mono-racial system still in existence in schools (Soudien, 2004). In addition, to achieve equal opportunity, it may be important to explore issues of power and privilege. Sometimes power and privilege are accepted as invisible norms of the dominant group and this marginalises the opportunity of the other groups. In this regard Delpit (1995) argues that unless an attempt is made to sensitize children to the differing perspectives of a diverse population, children of colour will continue to feel they need to act white and are hard pressed to see themselves worthy of notice. Even with well-intentioned educators the legacies of children can become invisible if educators, "... see all the same and as equals, we don't see colour" (Delpit, 1995 p112).

Gollnick et al (1990) recommend multicultural education as a means for positively using diversity in the total learning process. A critical element is the incorporation of issues and strategies related to membership in different micro-cultures, especially race, gender and class. She claims that issues should be dealt with in an interrelated manner. Multicultural education can be traced historically to the Civil Rights Movement, with African-American scholars according to Sleeter and McLaren (1995) providing much of the leadership of multicultural education.

The term "multi-ethnic education" was used to bridge racial and ethnic groups while "multicultural education" broadened the umbrella to include gender and other forms of diversity. The term "culture" rather than racism was adopted mainly so that audiences of white educators would engage with the issues. However, many educators have disconnected multicultural education from social struggles and redefined it to mean the celebration of ethnic foods and festivals (Sleeter and McLaren,1995). Nieto (2002) reminds that culture is not simply about the rituals, foods, and holidays of specific groups of people, but also about status, power and positionality within society. Social markers of status included language, race, class and gaining power and status is a real and challenging issue. Grant and Sleeter (1997) argue for a conscious effort to create change in positionality of social systems and such an effort includes taking action and acting as advocates for those marginalised within broader civic life.

This "tourist curriculum" of ethnic food and festivals, although constituting a superficial recognistion of diversity falls short of critical understanding and does not provide sufficient tools for learners to interact with diversity. It does not foster critical thinking about prejudice, stereotype and discrimination. Instead it focuses on superficial, even stereotypical,

exposure to "other people and exotic places" (Derman-Sparks, as cited by Goduka, 1999).

In relation to multicultural education and the increased demand for teaching approaches that relate to social justice, Grant and Sleeter (1997) offer five teaching approaches for dealing with diversity in the classroom. According to Delpit (1995) it is crucial that multi-cultural curricula be created that educate children about the differing perspectives of a diverse population.

Taking Grant and Sleeter's work into account, the conceptual base for this study is framed within a critical multicultural and social justice orientation to multiculturalism, and is linked to the principles of inclusivity, equity, non-discriminatory practices and respect for others for the common good of society (Goduka, 1999; Pendlebury and Enslin, 2004; Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Hemson, 2006).

Sleeter and Grant (1994) produced a typology of five approaches – teaching the exceptional and culturally different, human relations, single-group studies, multicultural education and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. The typology represents the development in the field of multicultural education in the USA and reflects the contrasting ideologies and purposes (Goduka, 1999).

Goduka (1999), expanding on the approaches, offers an explanation of the differences in these approaches. For the purpose of this study it was relevant to view her explanation with regard to teaching the exceptional and culturally different, multicultural education and the multicultural and social reconstructionist approach.

She describes the "teaching the exceptional and the culturally different " approach as a cultural deficit model that places emphasis on ways to help children fit into existing social structure and culture. Within this approach, children who do not have a white, middle-class background are frequently described as socially or culturally deprived, disadvantaged, under-prepared, deficient or, more recently, as children at risk. In this study, teachers spoke about the need to "fit in" whether it be based on the language, class or tradition of the school (Goduka, 1999, p48).

In the international arena of multiculturalism, "multicultural education" which is the fourth approach presented by Grant and Sleeter (1997), is a popular term used by educators to describe education policies and practices that recognise, accept and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender and race and seek to address disability, class, sexual orientation. These terms were also used by the teachers in the study to describe their understanding of diversity and how they deal with issues of diversity in the classroom. Other terms frequently used within this approach are "cultural pluralism", "equal opportunity" and, emerging from this study, the term "social justice".

The critics of the term multiculturalism are diverse and range from a conservative perspective – it is divisive and will lead to forms of cultural illiteracy – to the radical perspective which includes the concern that it focuses on sensitising white teachers and the school administrators to minority "differences". Drawing on the work of McCarthy (1998), Goduka (1999) states that by focusing on the sensitivity training and individual training, multicultural proponents typically skirt the very problem which multicultural education seeks to address, i.e. racism.

An approach suited to diversity practice in South Africa is multicultural and social reconstructionist, the final approach suggested by Grant and

Sleeter (1997) which includes teaching for social justice towards societal change. This approach goes beyond the others in that it offers a critique of modern culture's systems of oppression. In this model education is viewed as a transformative rather than reproductive, the latter being an approach to teaching and learning that leaves the social and political status quo unquestioned. The transformative agenda challenges structures of oppression which the celebratory approach may be unable to tackle.

As in other global contexts, multicultural education has been contested in South Africa and criticised due to the complex and sensitive nature of issues related to multicultural education. The approach has been labelled by some as inextricably aligned with apartheid racism with a focus on perceived differences between people (Moore, 1994; Goduka, 1999). In this study the teachers positioned themselves in opposition to apartheid education but continued to use a multicultural orientation in dealing with diversity in the classroom.

2.3.5 Cultural pluralism and cultural diversity

In relation to cultural pluralism, Grant and Sleeter (1997) state that cultural pluralism is not separatism but includes a sharing and blending of different ethnic cultures and other forms of culture while supporting other groups as they continue to develop distinctive group cultures.

Cordeiro et al (1994) further argue that there is a difference between cultural diversity and cultural pluralism. They argue that cultural diversity refers to an empirical condition and is descriptive in nature whereas cultural pluralism is a normative claim that seeks to suggest a particular course of action. A culturally diverse society represents a different cultural group within society. When we talk about a culturally plural society, we are

asserting both the presence of diversity and indicating that such diversity should be valued, respected and encouraged.

Banks (1995) purports that each individual is culturally diverse, belonging to several groups at the same time; Cushner et al (1992) support Banks and state :

> The problem in a pluralistic society is that most, if not all individuals are multicultural, each individual functioning in several different cultural systems. To predict behaviour and plan appropriate educational activity becomes difficult unless one examines the extent to which a particular cultural element is strong enough in an individual to govern that person's thinking and behaviour (p23).

Fyfe et al (1993) support the notion of pluralism as being a valuable concept. For Fyfe et al, pluralism as a value means recognising and being committed to the rights of others, individuals and groups, to be different. Pluralism implies that difference is positively desirable and interesting. A commitment to pluralism means a commitment to procedures in which all interested parties participate fully. This is crucial for social wellbeing, justice and equality which appeared to inform the willingness of the teachers in this study to cater for their diverse learner populations.

However, it is worth noting that in South Africa, culture was used as a justification for keeping people apart and whites privileged as politically, economically and culturally superior. The ideology of apartheid described culture as a static concept and used it as a barrier to prevent groups from mixing. While cultural pluralism may be seen as a model to deal with the deep rooted racial and cultural mix, it will not be without its friction because of prevailing unequal power relations. Cross (1991) reminds us that cultural pluralism can most certainly also be divisive and patronising.

2.3.6 Social justice

Social justice is generally understood as being largely about distributive justice. Broadly, it includes issues related to poverty, race, social environment, health, status and class, while from an educational perspective it includes the redistribution of educational goods and access to them. However, an account of social justice that focuses narrowly on the distribution of goods may lose sight of the meaning of those goods and a preoccupation with simple equality may obscure the real issues at stake in the pursuit of social justice (Pendlebury and Enslin, 2004).

Dealing with social justice in a formal rather than a substantive way may neglect the ways in which domination and oppression operate with the purpose of excluding people from the recognition and social goods necessary for human flourishing. Pendlebury and Enslin (2004) argue that educational and political inclusion are interdependent and lie together at the core of social justice.

The works of Miller (1999), Young (2000) and Nussbaum (2000) reveal that all three theorists take seriously the conditions necessary for living a fully human life and link these in one way or another to social justice – a goal of the new South African curriculum.

Elaborating further on the works of Young (2000), social justice requires the establishment of institutional and other structural conditions for promoting self-determination and self-development of all members of society. Young (2000) argues that these two ideals of social justice are pitted against the two general conditions of injustice, namely, domination and oppression. These, according to Young (2000) are the main impediments to the achievement of genuine agency. Oppression, with its

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five faces — exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence – inhibits people's capacity for self-development.

The struggle for social justice, equity and the inclusion of all learners in South African education cannot solely be achieved through changes such as an increase in the number of teachers and learners from diverse backgrounds at former HOA schools. It will also not only be accomplished by the redistribution of material and resources. Rather, it needs to address and challenge the ideological tenets and philosophical contradictions that have structured institutional environments to benefit some at the expense of others (Darder, 1994). Changes in education policy have not yet realised the constitutional obligation of dignity and quality of life for all learners away from undue hardships. This is an issue which emerges again in the findings of this study.

2.3.7 Inclusion/Exclusion

Another concept that emerged through the data as relevant to the study was that of the inclusion/exclusion framework introduced by Soudien, Carrim and Sayed (2004), who challenge the liberal notion of power-sharing which is based on discriminatory class and race practices. They argue that the changes in education policy, away from apartheid dictates towards decentralisation, have delivered a particular ambiguity that has enabled dominant groups to articulate their interest at the expense of the democratic commitments to poor and black groups, thus being dismissive of diversity.

Adding to the debate, Booth et al (2003) on the other hand view inclusion as a feature of the documents regulating the curricula and education systems of many countries, though the meaning that it is given differs from country to country and within different elements of education systems.

Furthermore Booth et al (2003) argue that inclusion is about consciously putting into action values based on equity, entitlement, community, participation and respect for diversity. Increasing inclusion is always linked with reducing exclusion and is concerned with the reduction of economic and social inequalities (Booth et al, 2003).

Cummins (1993) as cited in Goduka (1999) argues that the major block to educational success for many learners lies not only at the institutional level but also at the level of the interpersonal between educators and learners, where the relationship between the dominant and non-dominant groups within the larger society is perpetuated. According to Cummins (1993) authentic integration and inclusion for any range of diversity can only be achieved if educators engage in "personal redefinitions" of the way they engage learners they serve. Authentic inclusion therefore involves acceptance/non-acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity, the participation of diverse groups in education, teaching styles that either enable or hinder learners' abilities and educators who either advocate for learners or locate the problem within learners. Inclusion extends beyond the limited phenomenon of special learning needs and culture, and raises wider questions of equality, access, status and power within a school system and society (Stevenson, 2007).

2.3.8 Learning styles

Different learning styles is an aspect of diversity commonly experienced by teachers in the classroom. Drawing on the works of Grant and Sleeter (1997), common sense and education literature tell us that learners have different learning styles. This becomes problematic where a teacher is not comfortable with, or perhaps even aware of a learning style preferred by one or more learners in the classroom.

Learning style is a complex idea and involves how people perceive, process, store and retrieve information (Grant and Sleeter, 1997). In a learning situation, it involves asking the following questions: What cues does an individual attend to? How does the individual connect cues? What strategy does the individual use to make sense of new information or ideas? With what old information in the individual's head is the new information connected and stored? It is vital to be cognisant of the notion that everyone develops ways of approaching this information–processing tasks, and all do not develop the same ways (Grant and Sleeter, 1997).

Information processing is one way to view learning; Gardner's (1999) multiple intelligence idea is another way. According to Gardner (1999), there are at least nine different kinds of intelligence, and everyone has a profile of strengths and weaknesses. This includes linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intra-personal intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily kinaesthetic, naturalistic intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Gardner's work shows that individuals differ in the specific profile of intelligences they display, which may result from what is valued in their culture. This research illuminates the importance of considering a broad range of intelligences so that the talents and abilities of all learners are highlighted and valued. However, it should be cautioned that while individual intelligent profiles are developed, extrapolation should not be made to entire "culture" groups.

Gardner (1999) purports that learners who are not as strong in verbal skills as they are in other intelligence areas, often do not do as well in the classroom as they might have done if the classrooms supported other intelligence areas as well as they support verbal skills. Teachers who vary their teaching strategies can capitalise on additional areas of intelligence and thereby achieve greater success teaching their diversity of learners.

Teachers tend to teach the way they learn best, and by examining their learning styles they may improve their learning and teaching styles to the benefit of all learners. Dunn and Dunn's (1993) illustrate how important it is that teachers should understand the multi-dimensional aspects of learning. Research shows that when students are taught through their individual learning styles their attitudes towards subjects change for the better, they concentrate more readily, and they process information with greater ease, with the result that their overall performance improves significantly. As an added bonus, discipline problems are much reduced. The challenge is therefore for teachers to match their teaching styles with the learners' styles in their diverse classroom. Teachers should be reflective and flexible and incorporate a variety of teaching styles in their lesson programmes in order to respond to the diversity of learning styles among the learners in their class. Hillard (1992) as cited in Goduka (1999) states that teachers do misunderstand the learners' cultural behavioural styles and therefore underestimate their cognitive abilities and their affective, cultural and language skills. Further to the view, Delpit (1995) states that educators tend to frame their curriculum for diverse learners with rationale for failure, and not with visions of success. Such perception fails to recognise the learners' potential, which results in inappropriate instruction, and this in turn prevents the individual from participating in and benefiting from the learning activities.

The use of these concepts and theories in this study is further discussed in chapter six and seven of the thesis where the common threads are illuminated.

2.4 TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND DIVERSITY

This section reviews qualitative studies on teachers' perceptions of diversity and classroom practice as presented by Cushner et al (1992),

Sleeter and Grant (1994), Zeichner (1993), Banks (1995), Hemson et al (2003), all of which informed the research question which focused on primary school teachers' conceptual understanding of diversity. In order to examine the teachers' practice, McLaren (1989), Cushner et al's (1992) and Banks (1995) discussions on the relevant conceptual frameworks about issues of diversity are helpful.

According to Banks (1995) and Cushner et al (1992), the teachers' conceptual frameworks about issues of diversity are influenced by a cultural consciousness that involves an awareness of one's worldview and cultural identity in relation to others (McLaren, 1989). This awareness, according to Zeichner (1993) and Banks (1995), should be framed within one's perceptions, philosophy about different others and a commitment to the promotion of equal opportunity. This is further shown through the respect for lifestyles, learning styles, values, family background and communication patterns of diverse learners.

Cordeiro et al (1994) state that it is important to note that educators have historically viewed individuals according to their cultural backgrounds other than that of the dominant society in two ways, namely, from a deficit perspective and from a difference perspective. The deficit view sees cultural norms that are not part of dominant culture as deficits that are to be overcome. The difference theory, however, notes the presence of cultural differences and asserts that, in keeping with the anthropological doctrine of cultural relativism, such differences are simply that – differences, about which no comparative value judgments are appropriate.

In South Africa, educators, who for years had to teach in classrooms consisting of learners of their own racial group only, now have to teach some learners whose culture and very existence the educators may view with a stereotypic and prejudiced lens. The source of this prejudiced lens

may be traceable to the role of apartheid in South Africa (Carrim and Soudien, 1999). This attitude is reflected in the comments of teachers in the study: "They come from the townships so they struggle with communication and language."

According to Banks (1995) teachers enter the classroom with visible forms of differences – race, gender and physical attributes – but also bring invisible diversity to the classroom. Banks (1995) purports that the invisible differences include political opinion, sexual orientation, teaching and learning styles, class, family history and religion, having more to do with the individual's own self-perceptions and definitions rather than how they are perceived by others. It is these perceptions according to Banks (1995), that influence the worldviews of people, a tension that will always be part of the power relation in the classroom. Furthermore, Banks (1995) argues that teachers must be aware of their own presuppositions and assumptions so that diversity in the classroom can be used as an educative process and to challenge hidden assumptions about the "other". Educators therefore have the responsibility to ensure that all learners break out of group stereotypes that are generally disabling factors (Banks, 1995).

How teachers from all racial backgrounds perceive and treat each learner in the classroom is important for the learner to succeed. Goduka (1999) claims that most educators tend to regard individual differences based on cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity as deficits or disadvantages. Goduka (1999) cites Bennet (1995) who suggests that schools should rethink the deficit position where learners, especially from previously disadvantaged communities, are considered to be less able or even unable to cope as determined by the perceived attitude of the "adult". Such actions breed insensitivity to language and cultural diversity as well as to the capabilities and strengths that the children bring to the

classroom. Delpit (1995) cautions that the notion of culturally different children being mismatched to a particular school setting may create a self-fulfilling expectation of failure. The same applies to the assumption that poor children and black children are developmentally slower and less likely to succeed than their richer or white classmates respectively. The committed educator's task is to counteract such debilitating assumptions and to set a scene where all learners can be expected to achieve.

Furthermore, Goduka (1999) states that the deficit view further argues that learners from poor environments are not ready for school. It claims that their upbringing environments are seen as retarding the childrens' overall development and thus disadvantaging them at schools. The other element of the deficit model is the colour-blind view promoted by teachers who often fail to perceive the racism inherent in judging and comparing the success or failure of learners from different backgrounds to that of white children. Many teachers support the ethos of considering all learners to be the same without acknowledging the unequal relations of power in South Africa.

Critics of the deficit model argue instead for a model that embraces diversity – a call that the present study supports and confirms. Critics point out that the deficit view damages the learner's self-esteem, as achievement and success almost require a denial of the learner's upbringing, community cultural values and lived experiences (Goduka, 1999). This study is of the view that the teachers should examine and validate the wealth of knowledge and differences that learners bring to school regardless of their background; advocate social change to improve the life chances of learners.

2.5   STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

There has been growing concern in South Africa about how best to meet the educational challenge of learners' diversity. The issues raised with respect to educational equality, equity and social justice within a historical, legal and socio-political context are central to the content of learning. Grant and Sleeter (1997) argue for education strategies that include the development of educational programmes that embrace diversity and allow for critical examination of the power relations that exist within society. This study is framed within the view that schools should create an environment that encourages and promotes diversity practices reinforced by the democratic and culturally-sensitive classroom settings.

In dealing with diversity, literature suggests strategies that look at the personal, the classroom and the institution which are relevant to the study of diversity management. Grant and Sleeter (1997), Goduka (1999), Banks (1995), Cushner et al (1992) and others offer an approach that suggests changes to all learners and teachers (personal) so that the school (institution) and the classroom may become more concerned with human diversity, choice, equal opportunity and respect for the other.

This study revealed that the teachers' conceptual understanding of diversity is influenced by personal experiences, the classroom environment and what happens at school. A study by Robinson and Zinn (2007) on preparing teachers for diversity revealed that lecturers understood the concept diversity to encompass a range of categories, namely colour and race, gender, class and socio-economic issues, religion, language, learning differences, ability, disability; elements that give rise to the exclusion of individuals. Dealing with diversity is a process that requires reflection and Goduka (1999) suggests that the process should happen at different levels: personal, institutional and the

classroom. Goduka (1999) supported by Stevenson (2007) suggests that for institutions to empower both educators and learners to embrace diversity, deep reflection on the injustices of the past should take place using creative ways to grapple with issues of social justice.

The following is a delineation of the three levels, namely the personal, institutional and the classroom level, all three of which are important to the development of an interrelated approach in dealing with diversity.

2.5.1 Personal level

At a personal level, for an individual to function effectively in the way Banks (1995) and Cushner et al (1992) describe, it is necessary to have relevant conceptual frameworks about issues of diversity. Such an individual should come from a position of self-awareness in relation to different others, having an attitude that is not threatening to, nor threatened by different others. Banks (1995) describes this awareness of one's self, perceptions, and philosophy about different others as a commitment to the promotion of equal opportunity, respect for lifestyles, learning styles, values, family background and communication patterns of diverse learners. In this regard, historical perspectives are critical and imply that people have to critically analyse historical perspectives of people and conflicting paradigms, including knowledge of true historical contributions of various cultural groups to the development and origins of prejudice (Zeichner, 1993).

On the other hand, Jelloun (1999) in looking at interrelation issues, suggests the importance of values such as showing respect and displaying dignity as ways of honouring diversity. This argument is relevant to this study in that the promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development, but also to ensure that a national

South African identity is built on values different from those that underpinned apartheid education.

2.5.2 Institutional level

Lindsey et al (1999) posit another view on the concept of diversity. They argue that it has become politically correct to talk about issues of diversity since anything that used to be labelled deprived, disadvantaged or different, is now called diverse. Their claim is that not much has changed in schools except the labels. They propose that the focus should be on how schools can respond to issues arising from working with diverse populations. They claim that diversity is a neutral descriptor that lets you know that the people around you are not all like you. The authors propose a cultural proficiency model which constitutes the policies and practices of a school or the values and behaviours of an individual that enable the person or school to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment. Cultural proficiency is reflected in the way an organisation treats its employees, its clients, and its community.

This view has implications for how diversity training happens in institutions. Given the reality of diversity, teachers cannot be trained homogeneously based on the dominant culture of the institution. This latter approach is traditionally referred to as the assimilationist education, in which the subordinate must learn the dominant culture and the subordinate group's culture is isolated (Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1991). This approach has been discredited by Ladson-Billings (1990) as insensitive to cultural and linguistic values as it fails to build upon the individuals' own cultural resources. It is argued that the assimilationist approach does not legitimise the knowledge or experiences children bring to the school. Instead, the children who are different from the dominant culture, are labelled as failures because their backgrounds – usually their

language and culture – are seen as inadequate preparation for learning. Research in South Africa describes the prevalence of assimilationist approaches (Carrim and Soudien, 1999). However, not much research on practical ways of changing dominant hegemonic views exists (Dornbrack, 2007).

Dealing with diversity at an institutional level is not about making differences go away, it is about using them and building on them to create a culturally rich society. Schools reflect the wider society where suspicion and fear about diversity is still prevalent. However, schools should use diversity to improve their experience of learning and teaching in the classroom. Goduka (1999) proposes that educators start a dialogue with one another and their learners to deconstruct and reconstruct new experiences related to diversity.

Literature states that the supportive environment needed for exploring diversity issues, relies on the culture of the school. The culture of a school impacts on racial, cultural and gender issues (Cushner et al, 1992). Unless the whole school actively addresses issues, the patterns, hurtful practices and inequalities will be perpetuated (Eyber et al, 1997). Robinson (2003), concurring with this position, states that the support that an institution gives to teachers affects their involvement in the process of change.

Schools, by virtue of their crucial role in society play an important role (Nkomo, Chisholm and Mckinney, 2004) in a democratic society by providing opportunities and addressing challenges towards realising a diversified society in which people will respect each other's cultures. Schools, as Banks et al (2001) purport, are essential to maintaining democracy and can forge a common nation and destiny. They argue that it is in the school system where learners from different backgrounds,

culture, race, religion, language should meet on an equal footing and begin to recognise differences and challenge embedded power relations.

2.5.3 Classroom level

According to Cushner et al (1992) the critical role of the teacher to handle the increasing diversity in classroom settings must be recognised and attention needs to be given to empower teachers to take up the challenge effectively and in turn enable their learners to actively engage in exploring diverse ideas and worldviews. Within the framework of this study, classrooms are not seen as homogenous as both learners and teachers bring their diverse backgrounds to the classroom. This inevitably has a profound effect on the atmosphere and interaction in the classroom.

Preparing for such interactions involves knowing much about the students, as well as reflecting on one's own diversity issues. The goal in the classroom, according to Goduka (1999) is that respect is shown for each other's difference that is ecological and holistic. She purports that the classroom becomes an important place to develop talents and abilities, cognisant of social backgrounds and heritage. Drawing on the work of Shrewsbury (1987), Goduka states that the web of relationships in the classroom should stretch beyond it – that is, into the school environment and the community.

The enabling environment of a classroom that illustrates sensitivity to diversity allows the various cultural groups to maintain significant aspects of their cultural identities while building a shared affiliation with a national identity (Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1991). There are no universal solutions or specific rules for responding to ethnic, gender and cultural diversity in the classroom and research on best practices is limited. Davis (1993) suggests that the topic is complicated and dynamic and that the overriding

principle is to be thoughtful and sensitive to what could be considered the best form of intervention.

Delpit (1995) states that when we teach across the boundaries of race, class or gender, when we teach at all, we must recognise and overcome the power differential, the stereotypes, and the other barriers which prevent us from seeing each other. She claims that the aforementioned efforts must drive our teacher education, curriculum development, instructional strategies, and every aspect of the educational enterprise.

Huber-Brown (1993) states that it is critical to arm teachers with effective critical pedagogy to deal with diversity in the classroom and to challenge the notion of a "one size fits all" approach. Such an approach contradicts critical multiculturalism, as classrooms in South Africa do not represent homogenous groups. Learners enter the classrooms at different ages and stages of development and come from diverse cultural, social, economic, and language backgrounds.

This study is framed within the view that helping learners to explore diversity of any kind provides opportunities for learners and teachers to become acquainted, develop supportive relationships, work through difficulties, and enjoy learning from each other. It is imperative that teachers realise that there may be a gap between their experiences and the diverse learners they teach. Critically analysing the gap through a process of implementation of diversity lessons, classroom observations and co-construction of programmes will assist teachers to understand what is happening and provide them with new insights regarding diversity. A diversity pedagogical approach provides the framework to explore the complexities of power relations and the impact they have on the diverse backgrounds of the learners that are historically and socially constructed. It is suggested that if teachers understand the diverse backgrounds of the

learners and offer pastoral care, the teachers are able to influence the life chances of learners. Having a broad conceptual understanding of diversity and its implications is critical to new insights regarding diversity.

Gardner (2001) claims that the classroom is a critical social arena where individual lives are shaped and influenced through attitudes and values which are embedded in both the process and content of learning. High expectations, positive values and an inclusive ethos, that is, an acceptance and conceptual understanding of difference, are the guardians of successful classroom practice. He further argues that the work offered in the classroom should help to reinforce and consolidate awareness of diversity and the importance of taking into account everyone's needs when planning for the future. If learners have the opportunity to develop this kind of theoretical framework in the classroom, they are more likely to carry it through to adult life and apply it as generalised perspectives in their vocational and civic life.

Robinson et al (1999) support the position and state that if students do not recognise diversity at school, they may not be prepared to make the transition successfully to an increasingly pluralistic workforce. Helping students to explore diversity of any kind provides opportunities for students and staff to become acquainted, develop supportive relationships, work through difficulties, and enjoy learning from each other. Fyfe (1993) claims that education should include values, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavioural patterns that a person requires to play an active part in society and to interact with others, however different.

The literature suggests that curriculum programmes should be of such a nature that the learners are educated about the nature and beauty of their diverse cultures and background. Such a curriculum, Gardner (2001)

claims, would provide pupils with a critical awareness capable of seeing beyond superficial appearance and stereotype.

Working towards an understanding (of the shared values of society as a whole as well as to inculcate an appreciation) of the diversity of lifestyles and cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds that make up society and the wider world is important. Gardner (2001) concurs and argues further that the recognition that diversity exists within, as well as between different cultures, classes, religions and genders is an important phenomenon. Individuals have multiple affiliations which cause them to realign their individual identity over time and in different contexts.

In the context of practice, the classroom is where policy is implemented. Christie (1999) states that policy frameworks in South Africa have given very little attention to the context of implementation. In this context, Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) contend that teachers do not confront policy texts as naïve readers, but as persons with histories, with experiences, with values and purposes of their own and as such, interpret policies differently. This implies that teachers play an active role in the education policy change process as they construct their own frame of thinking and meaning (Smit, 2001). It is this view that has underpinned the motivation for this study.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) lend support to the view by stating that the real crunch comes in the relationship between these new programmes of policies and the thousands of subjective realities embedded in people's individual and organisational contexts and personal histories. This is illuminated in this study by the teachers' response to changes in the education system.

This study is underpinned by the conviction that developing frameworks for diversity practice includes understanding the links between the

personal, institutional and classroom. Drawing on these factors would develop insights into the varied perceptions regarding diversity, the culture of the school as well as the social realities surrounding the schools and classrooms.

2.6   PLACING THE RESEARCH WITHIN A POLICY FRAMEWORK

The historical and legislative context of post-apartheid South Africa pays attention to the quality development of all, regardless of their background. The policies developed included: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) the South African Schools Act (1996), The White Paper 6 on Inclusion in South African Education (2001), Language in Education, Religion in Education. Furthermore, the new curriculum with an outcomes-based education approach is based on the premise that all learners have the potential to learn and succeed. Dealing with diversity has been regulated by policy which directly informs education and processes in South Africa.

In post-apartheid South Africa, many laws and policies that affect equality, equity and diversity have been developed, influencing the policies of education and schools. The Constitution of South Africa (1996) is the foundation of the legal framework. The Constitution provides the basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa, while the Bill of Rights in the constitution allows all people in South Africa certain basic human rights, which may be invoked when deemed to have been violated.

The Department of Education's Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001) has highlighted ten fundamental constitutional values that schools need to promote. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002), (the National Curriculum for South African Schools), seeks to embody these values in the knowledge and skills it develops. It

intends to encourage amongst all learners, an awareness and understanding of the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and worldviews within which the unity of South Africa is manifested.

The Constitution states that neither the state nor the person may:

> Unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (Constitution of South Africa, 1996, p.7).

This clause guarantees the right to live in a diverse society and the right of each person to make his/her unique contribution to society. Within schools, the South African Schools Act (1996) governs issues of diversity in schools. The introduction of the Act reads:

> Whereas the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation; and whereas this country requires a new system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and economic wellbeing of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, (Act No. 84 of 1996).

The Constitution provides the basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa. This basis is elaborated upon through the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of

Education, 2001) which identifies ten fundamental values of the constitution: democracy, social justice and equity, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability, respect, the rule of law and reconciliation, which should underpin the lesson planning of teachers.

The Manifesto further identifies strategies taken up in the Revised National Curriculum Statement which is the curriculum for schools in South Africa. Some strategies linked to diversity include: infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights, learning about the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and worldviews within which the unity of South Africa is manifested, making multilingualism happen, using sport to shape social bonds, ensuring equal access to education, promoting anti-racism in schools and freeing the potential of girls and boys (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2002, p7).

The Department of Education's White Paper 6 (2001), the inclusion policy, offers a framework which outlines the Ministry's commitment to the provision of educational opportunities, in particular, for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development. It also concerns learners who have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the education and training system to accommodate the diversity of learning needs, and those who continue to be excluded from it.

In addition to all the challenges regarding diversity in schools, educators are also expected to embrace inclusion. The policies of schools need to reflect the challenges of diversity and inclusion, aligned to national and provincial policy, including the Children's Bill (UNESCO, 2003) which protects children's basic human rights.

Teachers are key to interpreting policy. Teachers never merely implement policy: they act as "street level bureaucrats" (Lipsky 1980), active agents in shaping policy and enacting their interpretations of it in the classroom. They exercise what Darling-Hammond (1991) has referred to as the power of the bottom over the top. Teachers must therefore be proficient in challenging a range of competencies. This means that in addition to the content knowledge, given the fluid and uncertain family structures, and social issues, the teacher, now more than ever, also becomes the nurturer, pastoral caregiver and role model for the development of a culture of civility and caring in the school community.

2.7 CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The advent of a new democracy in South Africa in 1994 presented many challenges to the new democratic government. An urgent challenge was to set out a new philosophy of education for South Africa based on the principles of equity and democracy.

The curriculum is central to the education and training system. In the past the curriculum in South Africa perpetuated race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and emphasised separateness, rather than common citizenship and nationhood. The design of the curriculum therefore reflects the values and principles of a new democratic South Africa. The teaching strategies explored in this study take place against the backdrop of this new national curriculum.

Curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa started immediately with the ushering in of democracy in 1994. Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework document (1996) was the first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa. It was informed by

principles derived from the White Paper on Education and Training (1995), the South African Qualifications Act (1995) and the National Education Policy Act (1996).

The new curriculum in South Africa expects teachers to change their roles from curriculum modifiers to curriculum developers (DoE, 2000), classroom managers and learning mediators in the context of a discourse that is unfamiliar (Harley and Parker, 1999). The curriculum attempts to offer teachers the space to be curriculum developers, which assumes that teachers have the willingness and capacity to do so. The capacity includes interpersonal skills and self-reflection, skills not developed during the period of apartheid education. Teacher training had not, in general, been geared towards the development of teachers as reflective practitioners. This according to Harley and Parker (1999) is related to the nature and culture of South African society, characterised by a history of authoritarianism, with teachers not being familiar with open-ended frameworks. This inherent history impacts on whether the goals and values of social justice, equity and democracy are interwoven across the curriculum and in the conceptions and practices of teachers. The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development, but also to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values different from those that underpinned apartheid education (DoE, 2002). The kind of learner envisaged is one who will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. It was in relation to this vision that this study looked at the responses of teachers to policy expectations and to the challenges of being a teacher in South Africa, ten years after the adoption of the new South African constitution.

According to Kader Asmal (2002), the then Minister of Education, the development of a national curriculum is a major challenge for the South

African nation. At its broadest level, the education system and its curriculum express ideas of a society and a vision of a new form of society developed through the curriculum development process. The curriculum should represent priorities and assumptions of what constitutes a "good education" at its deepest level (DoE, 2002). Asmal (2002) further states that the curriculum is and will be interpreted differently and enacted in diverse contexts, and purports that it will require effort by all to enable the realisation of its vision through addressing all those issues which make up teaching and learning, diversity being such an issue.

The Department's Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001) has highlighted ten fundamental constitutional values that schools need to promote. The Revised National Curriculum Statement, (2002), the National Curriculum for South African Schools, seeks to embody these values in the knowledge and skills it develops. It intends to encourage amongst all learners an awareness and understanding of the rich diversity of cultures, beliefs and worldviews within which the unity of South Africa is manifested.

The critical outcomes which underpin all learning in South Africa and which were adopted by South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) are intended to ensure that learners gain the skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success as well as to the success of their family, community and the nation as a whole. The one specific to the issue of diversity states that learners should be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts (Department of Education, 1997).

Educators at all levels are key contributors and have an important role to play in the transformation of education in South Africa. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) envisions teachers who are qualified,

competent, dedicated and caring and who will be able to fulfil the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators of 2000.

The curriculum plays a vital role in creating awareness of the relationship between human rights, a healthy environment, social justice, diversity and inclusivity. The NCS suggests that all learning areas and subjects reflect the principles and practices of social justice and human rights as defined in the constitution. In keeping with the constitution, the curriculum has been developed to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, and disability. The curriculum adopts an inclusive approach, ensuring that the special educational, social, emotional and physical needs of learners be addressed in the design and development of learning programmes (NCS, 2002).

The National Education Policy Act of 1996 set the stage for transformation and committed the state to enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each student, and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of rights.

This act is further supported by the South African School Act (1998) which committed South Africa to an educational system that would not only address the past injustices in education provision and contribute to the eradication of poverty and to the economic wellbeing of society, but would also advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, and protect and advance the diverse cultures and languages in South Africa.

The Language in Education policy promotes multilingualism, the development of official languages and the respect for all languages used

in the country. It is conceived as an integral aspect of policy aimed at the development of a non–racial nation in South Africa. Furthermore, it is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region. The underlying principle of the policy is to maintain home languages while providing access to, and the effective acquisition of, additional languages (DoE, 2002).

The concept of equity is extended to the relationship between religion and education, in a way that recognises the rich religious diversity of South Africa. The Religion in Education policy in South Africa embraces initiatives in cultural rebirth, moral regeneration and the promotion of values in schools. Religion plays a significant role in preserving South Africa's heritage, respecting diversity and building a future based on progressive values (DoE, 2002).

Core constitutional values such as citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief in an opinion must be promoted through the curriculum and extra-curricula activities. The same applies to schools' approach to religious festivals, school uniforms and even diets. The practices of schools must be tested against equality, tolerance, diversity, openness and accountability. Religion Education is about diversity, valuing the traditions and histories of values, while Religious Instruction is about giving or receiving instruction in a particular faith or belief, with a view to the inculcation of adherence to that faith or belief. Therefore, religious instruction may not be part of the formal school programme, as constituted by the National Curriculum Statement. However, schools are encouraged to allow the use of their facilities for such programmes, in a manner that does not interrupt or detract from the core educational purpose of the school. The policy also allows for religion observances on an equitable basis.

The policy is neither negative nor hostile towards any religion or faith and does not discriminate against anyone. Rather, it displays a profound respect towards religious faith and affirms the importance of the study of religion and religious observances.

The purpose of this policy is to build the community in South Africa by promoting respect for religious diversity. The policy provides a framework for the appropriate handling of three defined aspects of religion in schools: compulsory religion education, regulated observances and voluntary religion instruction. Breaking with confessional religious instruction of the past, the policy established a new educational agenda for teaching and learning about religions and religious diversity in South African Schools (Chidester, 2008).

The polices all influenced the curriculum in South Africa aimed at instilling in learners "the values of a society striving towards social justice, equity and development through the development of creative, critical and problem solving individuals" (DoE, 2005). This approach is taken up in the Critical Outcomes of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which require students to "show responsibility towards the environment and the health of others", demonstrate an "understanding of the world of work as a set of related systems", and show awareness of the importance of, among other things, "responsible citizenship" and "cultural sensitivity" (DoE, 2005).

In keeping with policy frameworks, the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) were developed which, through the different Learning Areas, are aimed at translating legislative requirements into meaningful interaction in the classroom. The outcomes and assessment statements of the Learning areas are to facilitate the teaching of the social goals of the curriculum and

also offer the framework for classroom lesson planning. Although the regulatory policy framework exists, the tension is about what happens or does not happen in classrooms regarding social justice. From a pedagogical position, it is classroom practice that determines the efficacy of policy.

Discussion documents on the National Curriculum Statements propose that "education for citizenship" be infused throughout the curriculum in such a way that young people learn basic political literacy, peace education, environmental education, democratic education, and anti-discrimination education. Conflict resolution skills should be developed and the importance of showing respect for the other should be emphasised. The learning area, Life Orientation, is ideally placed to deal with the aforementioned aspects, but the time allocated to the "soft option" learning area limits meaningful classroom interaction. Other learning areas that lend themselves to the teaching of diversity are languages, arts and culture, social sciences, natural sciences and economic and management sciences.

Policy choices in education are, in the first instance, determined by political rather than research considerations. However, the relationship between political values and the policy vehicles chosen to give effect to these values is by no means simple. In the South African context, the new curriculum for schools is based on the principle of providing equal opportunities for all children to develop the knowledge best suited to building a peaceful and prosperous society. The question remains about whether the curriculum, as constructed, is the best vehicle for achieving these aims in the majority of South African schools (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999). While the values may be sound, the legacy of apartheid with all its inequalities and imbalances obstructs the notion of "equal opportunities" for all in South Africa.

This section reviewed the historical developments of policy formulation for diversity in South African education, mindful of the culture of separatism of past education policy. It documents how dealing with diversity in the classroom is regulated by policy intended to promote social justice for all.

2.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the policy frameworks in South Africa and the literature related to a cluster of concepts relevant to diversity in education. These concepts were useful in exploring the research questions and were used as the basis for making sense of the teachers' perspectives on diversity.   Although the literature on diversity in education abounds, especially in the USA, there is still need for further South African studies that will take into account the diverse and contextual issues in South Africa.

This literature review explored what has been documented on the perspectives of dealing with diversity in the classroom. This was done in order to establish what is known about teachers' understanding of diversity and what the diversity issues are that they deal with in a classroom setting.   The review focused on the multi-faceted nature of diversity that included issues of race, language, religion, culture and learning styles.

Although diversity as a multi-faceted phenomenon was framed within critical pedagogy, it cannot be assumed that there is a connection between diversity teaching and critical pedagogy.   In this study the teachers' perspective of diversity was explored within the framework of critical theory and critical multiculturalism, and presented as an approach that will not only recognise differences but also challenge the inequalities

that exist in South African schools. Research placed within a critical theory paradigm is committed to a more just social order and involves a qualitative analysis of data explained in the following chapter.

In relation to policy, although a number of policies exist, there needs to be a shared understanding of how these policies support ways of dealing with diversity at schools to ensure effective implementation. These policies are not without their contestations and are part of the broader post-apartheid efforts in nation building and moving a divided society towards the notion of national unity.

The next chapter explains the research design of the study, outlining how data was gathered and analysed.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the qualitative research design and methodology of the study. In this chapter a brief theoretical review of qualitative research is presented and the methodology that was chosen for this study is explained. The review is followed by a discussion on the sample and the methods used to gather the information from the participants who taught in different school settings.

Then the various stages of data analysis are presented followed by a discussion of processes that are important to ensure rigour, reliability and validity. In the last section I outline my role as a researcher.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Multiple qualitative research methods were used in this study to "get a better fix on the subject matter on hand" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p3). Historically, quantitative research was considered to hold empirical reality as truth based on objectivity. Qualitative methods were observed with cynical scrutiny as subjective, biased, suspect and unrepresentative, or at best treated as a source of "rich" anecdotal material which could only be subordinate to quantitative methods (Griffin, 1986). Qualitative research is multi-method in focus and described by many researchers as naturalistic, interpretive, holistic and inductive (Maxwell, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; TerreBlanche and Durrheim, 1999; Patton, 2002; Pope et al, 2005). It is used in studies of human behaviour within the social, linguistic and historical features which give it shape (Kunkwezu, 2007).

Qualitative research as a methodology allows for the study of phenomena as they unfold in natural settings and real life situations without manipulation (Kelly, 1999). According to Maxwell (1996) qualitative research focuses on making sense of human experiences from within the context and from the perspective of human experience and is less concerned with creating universal law-like patterns of human behaviour. Thus, using qualitative research involves studying social phenomena in their natural settings, and attempting to make sense of, or interpreting them in terms of meanings people ascribe to them (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). These characteristics of qualitative research were important for this study as it allowed me access to the experiences of teachers regarding diversity. It also allowed me to uncover how they understood and managed diversity in their classrooms and to document their experiences, feelings and thoughts in their own words.

In the social sciences the fundamental philosophical systems that distinguish approaches to research are referred to as research paradigms (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Research paradigms are thus defined as sets of basic beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be studied, which provides frameworks for the entire research process (Cresswell, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1990). Each paradigm contains a set of assumptions that are coherently related in a unique way and have practical implications for the conduct, interpretation and utilization of research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

According to Durrheim (1999), a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the implementation of the research. In developing a research design, the choice of the paradigm constitutes one of the key tasks, as it is what informs the entire research process (Kunkwenza, 2007). This study used mainly the interpretive research paradigm but also drew on aspects

related to the critical theory paradigm, namely the emphasis on the dialogical processes. The interpretive research paradigm with its emphasis on experience and interpretation was most appropriate for the purpose of gauging teachers' understanding and management of diversity in a changing school environment. Therefore, for the purposes of this study the selected emphases were best suited to answering the research questions.

The qualitative approach was particularly useful for research being done in the Western Cape, South Africa, a province with complex social, economic and political peculiarities. Since ideological strands of the qualitative approach include critical theory, this research was also interested in challenging reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic and gender values. Critical theorists are of the opinion that research is an ethical and political act (Roman and Apple, 1990) aimed at bringing about social justice. This study was particularly interested in how teachers addressed diversity, issues of social exclusion and the different forms of oppression.

Qualitative research influenced by critical theory is interested in either how social values get reproduced in schools, or how people produce their choices and actions in society (Weiler, 1988; Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). The critical theory paradigm is therefore appropriate for studies that examine how teachers sort, select, favour, silence, or privilege particular groups of learners in relation to issues such as race, class, language, religion, culture and learning styles.

Griffin (1986) purports that quantitative techniques are different from qualitative methods, as the former favour a positivistic approach that was developed from the natural sciences. Griffin recommends the qualitative method for its flexibility, and promotes the use of a semi-structured group

approach by including a number of pre-selected questions. Flexibility serves to enhance the collection of data, especially if the area of research is sensitive and complex (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Expanding on the advantages of the qualitative approach, Skinner (1991) recommends this approach as it affords the participants the opportunity to articulate personal perceptions and interpretations and, consequently, derive authentic meaning that will facilitate the construction of a subjective definition of his/her reality.

A few questions emerged as to which method(s) would be the most conducive to the subject matter and would portray and illustrate the convictions and sentiments of the sample. The questions included: Does the study want to gather statistics regarding diversity? Is the research aimed at allowing teachers to relate their experiences? What form will best document teachers' perspectives of diversity and describe what they do in the classrooms? How will the teachers' understanding be recorded? What are the contexts in which teachers function? Most of the questions resonated with the purpose of qualitative research aimed at understanding the meaning of events and situations and the particular contexts within which the participants act.

The qualitative approach provided the most apt way of approaching these questions. The qualitative approach creates space and the opportunity for people to relate their stories through conversation, for example, during the interviews with the teachers, they were able express their opinions and engage with processes on the topic of diversity. The qualitative approach allowed for the different experiences and nuances of the participants to be recorded with a focus on specific situations and people and emphasis on words rather than numbers (Maxwell, 1996).

Furthermore, using a qualitative framework with its multiple research methods was useful as it allowed for the collection of detailed accounts of the experiences of the teachers and the context in which they operated.

3.3 SAMPLE

Both purposeful and convenience sampling informed the selection of the sample. The sample of this study consisted of 50 teachers. These teachers were from schools throughout the Cape Peninsula, teaching in the General Education Training Band (GET) i.e. Grade R to Grade 9. The teachers represented all racial groups. Of the 50 teachers in this sample, 43 were studying towards an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in Barriers to Learning at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). The other 7 teachers in the sample were a group of seven primary school teachers who had met regularly as colleagues and friends to share school and classroom experiences. They were not part of the ACE group, but a group of teachers who often met to discuss good practice in relation to the new curriculum. They had indicated an interest in the area of diversity and were therefore contacted for assistance with their insights. Including them in the sample also allowed for the expansion of views other than those that might have been influenced by the module 'Barriers to Learning'. These teachers were seen as key informants in the study, due to their active engagement with the issues under discussion.

It is worth noting that, in this particular sample, Foundation Phase teachers dominated the study. The sample consisted of 47 female and three male respondents. The majority taught at the former House of Representative (HOR) schools (formerly coloured schools), followed by the former Department of Education and Training (DET) (formerly black schools) and the House of Assembly (HOA) schools (formerly white schools) in the Western Cape, South Africa. The respondents' ages

ranged from 30 to 55 years, with the majority of teachers from the sample between 40 and 50 years old.

Only three respondents were males, which may be indicative of the population of primary school educators in South Africa, but also indicative of the teaching fraternity that is dominated by women. Most respondents cited English as their mother tongue. In terms of racial classification, the teachers were all mainly based at schools that in the past would represent their race. However, two coloured educators who were part of the focus group discussion, were teaching at former HOA schools. Furthermore, the fact that 33 were Foundation Phase teachers (Grade 1 to 3), 15 taught in the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4 to 6) and 2 were Senior Phase (Grade 7 to 9) teachers, has implications for how the teachers in this sample dealt with diversity in the classroom. The sample did, however, span the GET Phase in education.

The description of the demographics (Table 3.1) of the participants involved in the research is presented to show the diverse historical, geographic and socio-economic environment. Teacher biographies and their approach to classroom practice, and the effect that the contexts in which teachers work have on teaching is important to this study. It is for these reasons that the tabular biographical profile (Table 3.2) of the participating teachers is provided. The following information was gathered from the demographic section of the questionnaire and interview schedule.

Table 3.1: Demographics of participating teachers

Dept	Tot	Gender M	Gender F	Race C	Race I	Race A	Race W	HL X	HL E	HL A	Phase FP	Phase IP	Phase SP
HOR	30	0	30	30					23	7	19	10	1
HOD	1	0	1		1				1		1		
HOA	9	2	7	2			7		8	1	5	4	
DET	10	1	9			10		10			8	1	1
Total	50	3	47	32	1	10	7	10	32	8	33	15	2

M: Male

F: Female

HOR: House of Representative (Former coloured schools)

HOD: House of Delegates (Former Indian schools)

DET: Department of Education and Training (Former black schools)

HOA: House of Assembly (Former white schools)

HL: Home Language

X: Xhosa

E: English

A: Afrikaans

C: Coloured

I: Indian

A: African

W: White

FP: Foundation Phase

IP: Intermediate Phase

SP: Senior Phase

The apartheid system determined that coloured people could only be employed at HOR schools, white teachers at HOA schools and black teachers at DET schools. There were, however, cases where white teachers, albeit with special permission, could be employed at HOR and DET schools, but the majority of teachers at the former departments represented the race they were expected to teach. Coloured and black

teachers were not allowed to teach at white schools. It reveals how the previous educational dispensation grouped people to particular schools located in fairly homogenous geographic and socio-economic environments.

The study was undertaken with 50 teachers of whom nine taught at former model C schools. These schools were previously white advantaged schools that had been subjected to the influence of diversity before 1994, and their experiences could contribute valuable information about the challenges involved in managing diversity. Ten teachers taught at previously disadvantaged, former DET schools and 30 at former HOR schools classified as previously disadvantaged. These schools were considered to be on the whole largely homogenous and probably not subjected to the strains of managing diversity, which the findings have proved not to be the case.

The following tables present the profiles of the ten teachers interviewed and the five who were part of the focus group discussion. All the teachers agreed to be part of the study and were assured of the confidentiality of their information and their anonymity. Anonymity of the participants was ensured by the use of pseudonyms in this dissertation.

Table 3.2:   Biographical profile of the participants interviewed

Participant	Race	Age	Teaching Years	Grade	Qualifications	Post Level	Former Dept.
Hazel	C	43	25	1	Teachers' Diploma	Level 2 (HOD)	HOR
Hajira	C	54	30	3	Teachers' Diploma	Level 2 (HOD)	HOR
Penny	C	41	25	3	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOR
Winnie	C	43	25	2	Teachers' Diploma	Level 3 (Deputy Principal)	HOR
Jacky	W	41	23	4	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOA
Don	W	34	10	6	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOA
Lumka	A	31	11	6	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOA
Sipho	A	30	10	1	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	DET
Mickey	C	42	18	7	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOR
Jane	C	49	30	3	Bachelor of Education	Level 2 (HOD)	HOR

The following table represents the biographical profile of the participants who formed the focus group.

Table 3.3: Biographical profile of the participants in the focus group

Participant	Race	Age	Teaching Years	Grade	Qualifications	Post Level	Former Dept.
Joyce	C	45	24	2	Bachelor of Education	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOA
Cathy	C	51	34	2	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOR
Shirley	C	51	35	3	Bachelor of Education	Level 2 (HOD)	HOR
Jessie	C	48	26	1	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOR
Mavis	W	50	33	4	Teachers' Diploma	Level 1 (Teacher)	HOR

The respondents' ages of those interviewed and part of the focus group in this study ranged from 30 to 55, with an average of 23 years of teaching experience. It is worth noting that 77% of the teachers in the study were over 40 years of age and had, therefore, schooled during a period in South Africa characterised by enforced segregation. Only three of the participants had entered the profession since 1994 and interestingly were employed at schools formerly classified according to their race group. Nine of the teachers taught at former HOR schools, four at former HOA and two at former DET schools.

The data shows that all the participants were qualified, with varied qualifications. In terms of the education levels of the participants, three had a Bachelors Degree in Education while 12 had a Diploma in Education. Four were Heads of Departments (HODs – post level 2), one was a Deputy Principal and ten were post level one teachers. Ten were Foundation Phase teachers (Grades 1 – 3), four taught at the Intermediate Phase level (Grades 4 – 6) and one was a Senior Phase (Grades 7 – 9) teacher.

The demographics of the teachers was an important element to consider when addressing the question dealing with diversity in the classroom as it is likely that backgrounds of the teachers and the phase they teach may signal differences in orientation to managing diversity in the classroom.

3.4   SCHOOL SETTING

This section provides a general picture of school settings in the Western Cape. The historical factors of South Africa and visits to the areas by the researcher informed the picture. The schools are all located in geographical areas previously assigned to the different population groups.

The history of South Africa means that some disadvantaged schools were not well-equipped. In the past, the South African government allocated resources to schools based on discriminatory factors. Former HOA schools who catered for white learners received most of the allocation given to education while former HOR and particularly former DET schools did not receive much for resources and facilities.

Most of the former DET and HOR schools still lack resources and facilities; libraries, school halls, sport fields, and computer laboratories are the exception rather than the norm. Some of the buildings are dilapidated, with broken windows and the grounds fenced in for security reasons, as the schools are subjected to much vandalism. The social problems place severe strain on the schools and add to the "overloaded teaching situation". The prevalence of gangs makes it unsafe to leave the children unsupervised. The grounds are sandy with a concrete block for playing while some had limited playing space. Sub-economic houses and shacks border closely on some of the schools.

The physical environment at some other schools, mainly former HOA schools offer a different impression. The grounds of the schools are fairly neat and well-attended. The schools have playing fields and sport facilities and the surrounding houses could be described as conforming to middle class standards and in good condition.

The majority of learners at the DET and HOR schools are mainly from the surrounding area, although some do come from outside of the immediate community. The HOA and the HOR schools generally have learners from different racial groupings, varied backgrounds, different religions and whose mother tongue is not necessarily the language of instruction of the school. This presents the schools with both challenges and opportunities to deal with diversity. The description of the settings of the schools is

worth noting in terms of the context in which teaching takes place in the Western Cape, South Africa.

3.5   DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study incorporated three methods of data collection: (a) administration of an open-ended questionnaire, (b) individual interviews and (c) a focus group session. These methods were used to address the main research questions in this study:

a)   How do teachers understand diversity?

b)   How do teachers manage diversity in their classrooms?

The tools used in gathering the data in this study were determined by the topic under investigation. This study drew on the more structured approach as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), where questions are chosen, a decision taken (based on some criteria) as to who should be interviewed, and the interview schedules prepared prior to doing the field work.

The following figure maps the three steps of the data gathering process and methods employed in this study.

Figure 3.1   Methods Employed

Step 1:   Questionnaire with the 50 participants:

The questionnaire was a self-constructed open-ended
questionnaire. (Appendix A). It had two categories:
demographic and content questions, reflecting the
respondents' opinions and attitudes. The results informed
the formulation of the follow-up interview which added to the
data-gathering process of the study.

Step 2:   Interviews with 10 of the 50 participants:

An in-depth individual interview was conducted with ten
teachers based on criterion-based sampling selected from
the above sample of 50 participants. All interviews were
audio-taped and transcribed. The semi-structured interviews
lasted for 30 to 60 minutes each. (Appendix B – list of
interview schedules).

Step 3:   Focus Group discussion with 5 of the 50 participants

A focus group session with a separate set of five teachers
was held. Criterion based sampling was used to select the
five teachers from the sample of 50. This session was also
audio-taped and transcribed. Although the interview
schedule was used as a basis for the discussion, it allowed
for communication between participants who exchanged
anecdotes and commented on each other's experiences.
This session lasted for 150 minutes.

The methods were consistent with qualitative research and with the paradigms adopted for this study. Given the nature of qualitative research - the need to understand the way people think about their world and how definitions are formed (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007) - it is clear that as a researcher you need to get close to the subjects of the study, to hear them talk about their everyday lived experiences.

The process of gathering data provided participants with the opportunity to engage in written responses (questionnaires) and conversation (interviews and focus groups). The three methods used to collect the data enabled me to gather different views from which to understand and develop a category. The use of the various instruments (elaborated on in the following section) yielded large amounts of textual data that were systematically prepared and analysed.

According to Maxwell (1996) an essential consideration in designing the methods for a study requires the creation of a coherent design in which the different methods fit together and are integrated with the other components of the design. The most critical connection is with the research question and the methods used to collect the data seemed appropriate to generate the rich data that had to be interpreted and analysed in relation to the research questions as demonstrated in Table 3.4. A useful tool in determining the compatibility is a matrix in which the questions are listed and it is shown how each of the components of the methods will help gather the data to answer the questions (Maxwell, 1996). The matrix (Table 3.4) therefore summarises the justification for the methodological decisions of this study, while Table 3.5 provides a summary of the data collection with regard to the 50 participants.

Table 3.4: Data-Planning Matrix: Adapted from Maxwell, 1996

What do I need to know	Why do I need to know	What kind of data will answer the questions	Where can I find the data	Whom do I contact	Timelines
What do teachers know about diversity?	To ascertain teachers' understanding of diversity.	Teachers survey, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion.	Primary school teachers	INSET Teachers Cluster group of teachers	August 2004 to August 2007
What issues of diversity do they experience at schools?	To determine teachers' experiences.	Teachers survey, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion.	Primary school teachers	Individual classroom teachers	August 2004 to August 2007
What do teachers do in the classroom regarding diversity?	To determine how they plan lessons and what they do in their classrooms.	Teachers survey, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion.	Primary school teachers	Classroom Teachers	August 2004 to August 2007
What are teachers' own attitudes regarding diversity?	To ascertain what influences their thinking, values, approaches and attitude to change.	Teachers survey, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion.	Primary school teachers	Classroom Teachers	August 2004 to August 2007

The plan as suggested by Maxwell (1996) was useful for this study as it offered a framework for the procedure followed by the researcher in gathering the data. Although qualitative researchers proceed as if they know little about their participants, they do bring their own specific backgrounds and experiences to the study. Guided by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the researcher was reminded that the procedure in qualitative research is based on theoretical assumptions that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behaviour. Drawing on the methodology of qualitative research and the approaches used by Banks (1989); Schon (1995); Jacobs (1995); Grant and Sleeter (1999); Banks et al (2001), employing methods such as interviews and focus group discussions, looking at diverse classrooms can generate useful information which teachers and policy makers can draw on to develop strategies to improve educational practice. The study recognizes the contested nature of cultural traditions, as well as the complexity of diversity. The methodology of qualitative research was best suited to deal with the topic.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

In this study the questionnaire was used as a first instrument in order to collect data from the teachers. It proved to be a useful tool for gathering information from a large group such as the 43 ACE teachers and the seven informants in one sitting.

The questionnaire was used to address the following questions:

a) How do teachers understanding diversity?
b) What influenced their understanding of diversity?
c) What kind of diversity issues does the school have to deal with?
d) How does the teacher deal with the diversity issues in the classroom?

e) Do the teachers feel positive or negative about the changes in South African education?

f) How do teachers feel about the changes that they have had to implement in their classrooms and schools?

According to Graziano and Raulin (2004) a questionnaire is useful in learning about the ideas, knowledge, feeling, opinions and attitudes of a defined population. The questionnaire is uncluttered and orderly in appearance and pitched within the reading and comprehension abilities of the respondents. These opinions vary and are not evaluated as right or wrong. Although information in surveys is the self-report of people and relatively convenient to obtain, there are obvious concerns about the reliability and validity of reports (Graziano and Raulin, 2004). Therefore interviews were also conducted, as the questionnaire does not help to clearly answer the "why". Graziano and Raulin (2004) contend that the "why" questions can be better answered using interactive methods such as interviews.

The research question was explored by asking teachers to explain their understanding of diversity, what influenced their thoughts regarding diversity, the issues of diversity they are confronted with at school, and how they deal with the issues of diversity in the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers were asked to express how they feel about the changes in South African education and how they feel about the changes they need to implement in their classrooms. These questions were asked to ascertain teachers' attitude to the transformation agenda informing education in South Africa.

The process commenced in 2004 with the teachers completing questionnaires within the allocated 45 minutes. There was ample time for

them to ask questions to make sure they had a proper understanding of the questions.

3.5.2 Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with ten teachers drawn from the sample of 50 to solicit from them:

a)   their understanding of diversity.

b)   what has informed their understanding of diversity.

c)   what the diversity issues they deal with at school and the classroom are.

d)   how they have intervened around the issues of diversity at school.

e)   what their personal views are on the issue of diversity.

f)   how they plan their lessons to deal with diversity.

g)   whether the curriculum policies have been helpful.

h)   how they feel about the curriculum policies.

i)   what the factors in their schools are that impact on the way they deal with these issues.

j)   other related issues in terms of diversity.

All the interviews were conducted by me as the researcher. The approach allowed all teachers to articulate their experiences regarding the management of diversity in the classroom. The interviews were conducted with the participants in a personal manner using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix B). The interviews were recorded on an audio-tape recorder. The data gathered was transcribed, coded and analysed.

The semi-structured interview schedule was useful because it allowed for collection of detailed information on the teachers' understanding and

experiences, how they plan and what they do in the classroom. Although there were set questions to ensure that all the relevant sections were covered in the interviews, there was no coercion towards answering the question exactly. The open-ended approach allowed for free association by the interviewee during each session. With the interviewees' permission, all interviews were audio-taped. Each respondent was told that his or her identity would not be made public and he/she would have the opportunity to check the interview script if so wished.

Social science research has witnessed the development of the applications and techniques of interviewing, and many kinds of social science enquiry now use interviews as a method of serious data collection (Brenner, Brown and Canter, 1985). The value of the interviewing system is based on acquiring the respondents' own accounts of specific areas, by "asking them", and through direct communication, the respondent and researchers can enhance and harness mutual understanding (Brenner, Brown and Canter, 1985).

The assumptions underlying the use of interviews are that people can not only comment on their experiences and feelings, but also that such interchange is basic to their everyday lives. The interview method consequently harnesses the daily-occurring activity of talk. The research situation, however, is a rather special conversational interaction. It has its own particular dynamics, such as interview style and setting that have to be taken into account. Since the interview as a tool is very flexible, it can deal with a variety of subject matter at different levels of detail and complexity (Finch, 1984).

Furthermore, the interview method allows both parties to explore the meaning of questions and answers involved, by implicitly and explicitly sharing and/or negotiating the understanding of certain issues (Finch,

1984; Bruner, 1987; Potter and Wetherall, 1987). If misunderstandings arise for either the interviewer or interviewee, they can be clarified immediately in a way that is not possible when questionnaires are being completed or tests being performed (Finch, 1984; Bruner, 1987).

The disadvantages could be that the topic is incompatible with the interviewee, and that the interviewer has poor interviewing skills, or poor time-management and organisational abilities (Finch, 1984). In addition, the face-to-face style could be experienced as intensive, especially if the topic is of a sensitive nature, and inadvertently allows biases to occur which could lead to invalidity of the material (Finch, 1984). Furthermore, language could also be an issue, especially where informants may omit important details, which are taken for granted but would be vital if communicated (Gaskell, 2000). In addition, respondents may view situations with distorted eyes and provide accounts that are misleading (Kunkwenzu, 2007). These limitations were minimised by the triangulation of data gathering methods that were used in this study. In this study the participants were rather comfortable with the topic and engaged fairly easily with the researcher who conducted all the interviews.

During the interviewing phase of the research, four main areas were addressed. The participants were asked to give their understanding of diversity, their personal role and opinions regarding diversity, the issues that they are confronted with at school and in the classroom, and how they intervene and deal with issues in the classroom. The teachers were probed for clarification of issues and given ample time to gain clarity regarding the questions. The participants were at liberty to refrain from answering any question they deemed "sensitive". However, all participants were prepared to answer all questions.

Those interviewed were visited or met at a place conducive to the process of data gathering. This involved working with participants over weekends or during the school vacations. The participants were contacted telephonically and permission sought from them to participate in the research. The interview times were negotiated and scheduled accordingly. All the participants contacted were willing to participate in the study.

3.5.3 Focus Groups

The focus group methodology was used to generate more qualitative data, where the participants had to discuss diversity and how they deal with it in the classroom. As the issue of diversity is a rather sensitive one, interviewing the group provided focused discussions in a non-threatening manner. This encouraged participants to project their own feelings through engaging with the questions and producing, reflecting on and learning from the data generated. This was a helpful method to utilise in this study as the aim was to elicit multiple perspectives from the respondents on diversity, a controversial issue in South Africa.

In addition, the focus group method also allowed for an environment where the teachers were able to articulate their experiences and understanding of diversity in the company of other teachers. This space allowed the teachers to find support or varying options to deal with diversity in the classroom. The different insights and opinions also added a different dimension to the issue of classroom diversity management. Although group participants can stimulate each other to articulate their views or even realise what their own views are, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) caution that in focus groups, a limitation is that individuals may sometimes not share important experiences they have had because they are too embarrassed to share them in a group. Although the space was safe and

comfortable, the researcher was unable to determine whether information was withheld.

Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data. This method encourages participants to talk to one another, asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each others' experiences and points of view. This method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way. It is a method that can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interview. Using a set of open-ended questions allows the participants to explore the issue that is of importance to them. This method also taps into the many different forms of communication used daily by people, including jokes, anecdotes, teasing and arguing (Kitzinger, 1995).

Gaining access to such variety of communication is useful because people's knowledge and attitudes are not entirely encapsulated in reasoned responses to direct questions. Rather, everyday forms of communication may tell us as much, if not more, about what people know or experience. In this sense, focus groups reach the parts that other methods cannot reach, revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by more conventional data collection techniques (Kitzinger, 1995).

According to Kitzinger (1995), the downside of such group dynamics is that articulation of group norms may silence individual voices of dissent, while the presence of other research participants may also compromise the confidentiality of the research session. However, it should not be assumed that groups are, by definition, inhibiting relative to the supposed

privacy of an interview situation or that focus groups are inappropriate when researching sensitive topics. Quite the opposite may be true. Group work can actively facilitate the discussion of sensitive topics because the less inhibited members of the group break the ice for the shyer participants. Participants can also provide mutual support in expressing feelings that are common to their group, but which they consider to deviate from mainstream culture (Kitzinger, 1995).

The usefulness of focus groups lies in their ability to generate collective grappling and understanding of events and issues. When this is accomplished, the ability to better respond to diversity issues is increased. The focus group methodology was chosen to validate the data generated through the questionnaire and interviews, and to develop insight into possible intervention strategies for future diverse classroom situations. In addition, the group discussion allowed for the approach to diversity to be enriched because of the shared discourse and the collaborative thinking through of issues. This encouraged participants to project their own feelings in a non-threatening way by engaging with, reflecting on and learning from each other.

The observations based on the group's verbal and non-verbal communications were that the teachers were comfortable in discussing issues of diversity. After some probing, the teachers showed some more introspection and articulated some personal experiences and their own planning or lack of planning regarding diversity.

The focus group discussion took place after the questionnaire was administered, interviews were conducted and theoretical saturation reached. This, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), is a situation when further interviews no longer add new information to the data gathered.

The focus group discussion acted as a wrap-up and also allowed for validation on the major categories summarised.

The session that was audio-taped and at which notes were taken lasted for three hours. The teachers were allowed to respond at their leisure and interact with the responses offered by the other teachers. As the discussion proceeded and once new issues and ideas were triggered for them during this session, the teachers often returned to questions asked earlier during the process. The focus group discussion as a methodology allowed for interesting anecdotal accounts and personal reflection. As the teachers had either studied together or met as colleagues, they were comfortable in expressing their views, differing where necessary and adding to the opinions tabled. The same questions used for the personal interviews (Appendix B) were used to generate discussion during the focus group session. The interviewer probed the discussion for clarity and elaboration when necessary, accommodating general and specific positions.

The three methods were most appropriate for this study as it allowed for the gathering of rich data to address the two main research questions related to educators' understanding and management of diversity. The instruments used in this study were developed on the basis of the expansive literature related to cultural diversity and multi-culturalism (Banks, 1989; Grant and Sleeter, 1999; Banks et al, 2001) and also to South African education policy.

The data then had to be described, summarized and analyzed, which resulted in implications for policy and practice (Chapter 8) that were derived from the data. Data used in this study was solicited through questions that were qualitative in nature as it comprised open-ended

questions. The selection of quotes in this study was purposive to stress the points emerging from the data.

3.6   DATA ORGANISATION

In this study the data was organized into retrievable sections. Each questionnaire and interview transcript was numbered and the interviewees were given pseudonyms. As all information received is confidential, the files were securely kept. The narrative data was also coded which allowed for the unit of text used to be traced back to its original context. The data was placed into chart tables according to categories so that the data could be easily read across the whole data set. The tabulated tables contained both key words, paraphrases of key issues and snippets of data.

Drawing on the qualitative discussion of Strauss (1987), Glaser (1992) and Maxwell (1996), the main categorising strategy in qualitative research is coding. In this study the data developed was read, listened to and sections were summarised with descriptive codes attached and rearranged into categories (Strauss, 1987; Glaser, 1992). This facilitated the process of data comparison between the categories assisting with the development of theoretical concepts that seem to fit the data (Strauss, 1987).

In this study, after familiarizing myself with the material, preliminary coding took place. Some of the codes were identified by "in vivo" terms that the respondents themselves used while some were named by me to include a variety of ways in which the respondents expressed an underlying concept. Some initial codes and categories were influenced by Cushner et al's (1992) definition of diversity as it offered a good framework for searching the data material and making sense of the data. However, space was also allowed for codes and categories to emerge inductively.

In searching the data it became apparent how differently some respondents spoke about issues. In looking at these differences the codes had to be refined and revised categories then created with other data also falling into these new categories. The codes that seemed similar were combined into one category while in some cases the code became the category. It is through this codification process that the similar and different trends were identified. Whilst coding, the idea is to search the data for patterns which the data cover (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). As the connections and relationships were made, the codes were refined, data combined and placed into the new revised categories.

3.7   ANALYSIS PROCESS

According to Lacey and Luff (2001) there is no one right way to analyze qualitative data, and there are several approaches available. However, most qualitative analysis falls under the general heading of "thematic analysis," and it is this procedure which characterizes most aspects of the present study. However, use was also made of frequency counts (Appendix H) and of analytic induction.

The following are the analysis procedures followed in looking at how teachers deal with diversity in the classroom.

The questionnaires were coded and the interviews and the focus group discussion transcribed, coded and then compared using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1976; Glaser, 1993; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method was the method used throughout this study. This method informed this study where concepts or categories emerging from one stage of data analysis were compared with concepts emerging from the next (Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2005).

This process entails that each item is checked or compared with the rest of the data to establish analytic categories. The key point about this process is that it is inclusive; categories are added to reflect as many nuances in the data as possible. Developing a list of coding categories from the data collected is a crucial step in data analysis. According to Pope et al (2005) the key point about constant comparison is that it is inclusive and that categories are added to reflect as many of the nuances in the data as possible.

Furthermore, the constant comparative method allows the researcher to code and analyze data to generate theory systematically. Using this method, all qualitative data from the questionnaire, individual interviews and focus group discussion were typed on file, read and then coded in order to organize the data in a manner that constituted "proof for a given proposition" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

As part of the analysis, similarities and differences about the compiled codes were clustered together to create categories and where necessary these were refined in relation to the context, meanings and circumstances of dealing with diversity. According to Lacey and Luff (2001), this stage involves the identification of themes or emergent concepts where the researcher engages in re-coding to develop well-defined categories to best capture the different data. The process of coding, matching, comparing and grouping to form categories continued throughout the process until saturation was reached; meaning that no new data was generated and, therefore, no new categories presented. The categories were then further refined and reduced to offer a more expansive framework for organizing the data. The main task was to sort out the categories that had been created by looking at the various codes that comprised the category. This process added clarity, as it involved sorting

out the categories, and opened up new insights into the links between some of the categories.

Furthermore, in the search for patterns, associations, concepts and explanations in the data, a process known as "mapping and interpretation" took place. This process is usually aided by visual displays and plots (Appendix I). Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest that at this stage the researcher is aiming to define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies, find associations within the data and provide explanations or develop strategies. They state that the emphasis which will be focused on will depend on both the categories/themes that have emerged from the data and the original research questions. At this stage the aim was also to start making links in the categories developed.

The analysis process was also in keeping with steps of Huberman and Miles (1998), and the display ideas of Miles and Huberman (1994). These steps include noting patterns and themes, making intuitive responses or sense of the evidence, clustering the data by conceptual grouping, making contrasts, comparisons and connections, noting relations between sources of evidence and making theoretical coherence – through comparison of the data – with constructs in the literature. Interpretation of the data was done by comparing the data with existing relevant literature and similar studies by for example Banks (1995); Banks et al (2001); Brown (2003); Carriem et al (1999); Cushner (1995); Dolby (2000); Gardner (2001); Grant and Sleeter (1997). This was useful to establish and show the parameters within which the current study is applicable.

The unit of analysis for this study consisted of several sentences or phrases within a transcript. At a practical level the process involved using highlighter pens of different colours, circling or underlining key phrases/words or listing codes in the margins when reading though the

transcripts and developing codes from data. The margins of the transcripts were also used for noting questions, interpretations and insights. The information was documented on the computer according to a process called "charting" where the data is boxed according to categories containing words, paraphrases of key issues as well as snippets of data. The copy and paste function of the PC Word Processor allowed data to be moved according to the emerging categories.

As the analytical process unfolded, the next step was to move the data from the descriptive to a more abstract level of theoretical coding or propositions about the data (Pope et al, 2005). The process of "mapping" was used to identify relationships and bring clarity on the links between the categories in order to develop theory. This involved using lines and arrows to show the relationships between categories.

This step in the analysis process, according to Maxwell (1996) involves developing an understanding of the data by looking for relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole. This step is necessary to move the data to a more abstract level, towards the development of theory or propositions - a primary goal of analysis. In this study, categories were analysed to identify the conceptual understanding teachers have of diversity and how they deal with diversity in the classroom, further discussed in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

In addition, frequency analysis was used as a tool to determine how many times certain terms/codes were uttered by the participants. These terms were counted and tabulated as presented (Appendix H). As certain terms would have different meanings for the different participants, frequency analysis as a tool has its limitations in qualitative research. Crudely, it did however provide a broad sense of the issues and concerns expressed by

the participants. The process of frequency analysis complemented the process of coding and thematic analysis and supported the facilitation of the comparison of data within and between categories and the development of concepts.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Key concerns of seeking empirical rigour are that of validity and reliability which are important issues in all research. Drawing on a range of literature regarding the issue of validity in qualitative research, Altheide and Johnson (1998) argue that the criteria for judging the internal worth of any research needs to be drawn from the intentions of that research, so that these criteria are meaningful. Referring to validity and reliability Kunkwenza (2007), drawing on Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999), states that validity is the degree to which results are sound while reliability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which results are reliable. Although validity is a crucial factor in ensuring the credibility of results, criteria for establishing the validity of qualitative findings remain a contentious issue (Maxwell, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Many qualitative researchers, particularly those aligned to critical theory have argued that trustworthiness is a more appropriate term to use in the context of qualitative research.

The criteria used in this research included the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data, drawn from the perspective of the people studied and the meanings they attach to their words and actions (Maxwell, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Data triangulation was used to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings to demonstrate reliability and validity. Triangulation involves collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods. This reduces the risk that your conclusions reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a

specific method, and it allows for better assessment of the validity of the explanations developed (Maxwell, 1996). A key strength of triangulation is the possibility to uncover the complexities of real life research situations and finding different views for further investigation.

The use of multiple forms of data collection methods is a manner of complementing each individual form of data collection, thereby balancing out their shortcomings (Mouton, 1996). Merriam (1988) argues that the rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another and, by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies.

This strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that are developed (Maxwell, 1996). Dexter (1970) and Fielding and Fielding (1986) argue that it is not true that triangulation automatically increases validity as the methods that are triangulated may have the same biases and sources of invalidity, thus providing a false sense of security. Fielding and Fielding (1986) thus emphasise the need to recognise the fallibility of any particular data or method and to triangulate in terms of validity threats.

Being part of a research group looking at the issues of diversity in education was a means of testing the research against the criteria of face and catalytic validity (Lather, 1991). Catalytic validity points to the degree where an understanding of the world and how it is shaped is developed in order for changes to be introduced. The issue of seeking validity has been questioned in certain forms of societal inquiry, particularly since the notion of validity has traditionally been linked to the quest for true and objective findings associated with a positivist paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Through presentations and discussions, a means of verifying the data was

established. However, the main way of seeking validity in this research was that of data source triangulation which refers to the use of multiple perspectives in a study. It was through the process of administering the questionnaire, interviews and focus group session where concurrence of meaning and understanding was established, and the different perspectives of how the teachers interconnected, complemented or contradicted one another were also observed. According to Maxwell (1996) the multiple sources and methods of data gathering are important, because it helps to add credibility, richness and depth to the inquiry.

In addition, the main categories identified were also presented to the teachers who were part of the focus group discussion Feedback to respondents has been seen as important in involving participants in the research process. Respondent validation, is another way of gaining validity of the findings and seen as a mark of quality and another way of demonstrating rigour (Lacey and Luff, 2001). Validation helps to authenticate transcripts and ensures that the perspectives and experiences of participants are correctly and accurately presented (Maxwell, 1996).

3.9   ROLE OF RESEARCHER

This research paradigm was placed within a framework that includes critical multi-culturalism and critical theory. In relation to critical theory, all social relations are influenced by power that must be accounted for in analysing informants' interpretations of their own situations. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), it is not accurate to describe the analytical processes as completely inductive; the researcher has ideas about race, class and gender, for example, before he enters the field and these ideas are influential.

This study in a way was prompted by questions arising from my experience of thirteen years as a subject advisor/curriculum manager (my entire work experience in education spans twenty-two years). I perceive my experience as being important content that I brought into this study. Although I as the researcher had particular views on diversity management in schools my perspectives were further shaped by the experiences of the participants in this study. The process allowed me, classified as a coloured male employed by the Western Cape Education Department in the Western Cape, South Africa as a Curriculum Manager to "dig deeper" into the teachers' understanding of diversity through reading their responses and listening to them regarding their experiences. I was always mindful of the fact that the participants were likely to modify their comments due to my position. The participants were always reminded that I was entering their world as a social researcher and not as a curriculum manager. However, my experiences as a teacher, subject advisor and curriculum manager were a valuable source of insight.

As a social researcher I entered the lives of teachers with whom I had both direct and indirect contact as an official of Western Cape Education Department. This could have been a cause of conflict of roles and affected field-work relationships. I was sensitive to the power relations that may exist, given my position in the bureaucracy of education, and the interplay of my multiple roles had to be carefully observed in this study. However, being someone who was somehow known to the participants proved advantageous. I am of the opinion that this familiarity helped the participants to relax and facilitated my access to them. My sense was that the participants were comfortable relating and sharing their stories with me. Furthermore, I was also sensitive to the important issues in the data (Holloway, 1997; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

As qualitative research is an interpretative and subjective exercise according to Pope et al (2005), I was intimately involved in the research process, not aloof from it.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

The teachers were willing participants to whom the ethical considerations of research were explained. The participants were told that they were under no obligation to participate. Since the topic addresses controversial and often personal issues, the teachers involved in the research were treated with sensitivity and respect. In addition, all the information obtained was regarded as confidential. All the names of the teachers have been changed to ensure confidentiality. Permission was granted to conduct the study by the research committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and the Western Cape Education Department.

3.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a detailed discussion of the qualitative approach that framed this study has been presented. This chapter has also outlined the research design and explained the three methods used to gather the data for the study.

In the next chapters the data obtained with the aid of the three data-gathering methods described in this chapter, is presented, with chapter six, seven and eight offering data interpretation and implications for theory and practice.

CHAPTER FOUR
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The organisation of the data began with the information gathered from the questionnaire, which offered the initial categories of analysis. These categories form the basis of this chapter.

The questionnaire comprised of six questions. It included asking the participants about their understanding of diversity and what influenced the thoughts that they had expressed. It explored what kinds of issues they have to deal with at school and how they deal with them in the classroom. The fourth question, noting that the schools in South Africa have become more diverse and that teachers are expected to adjust to the changes, focused on how they felt about the changes in South African education and about the changes they have had to implement in their classrooms and schools.

The different sections of the questionnaire were coded according to the responses presented by the participants. The questionnaire formed the basis for the development of the codes and categories. Following this process, the interviews were more focused and able to gather additional information, for example on classroom practice and resources needed to deal with diversity.

This chapter outlines the findings of the questionnaire and provides a summary of the key issues emerging from the 50 questionnaires. The subsequent chapter outlines the findings from the interviews and focus groups.

4.2 RESPONSES FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section of the study the purposive selection of quotations is used to illustrate the responses of a teacher in a different context of teaching. The participants taught at former HOR schools (meant to cater for coloured children only under apartheid legislation), former HOA schools (meant to cater for white children only under apartheid legislation) and DET schools (meant to cater for Black children only under apartheid legislation). The selection of more HOR schools was done to further illustrate the sometimes varied conditions at such schools. Furthermore, the quotes depicted the varied socio-economic status of schools which was closely linked to the former racial classification of the school. Besides the different geographical settings, they also represented the different language and religious compositions of schools, while offering some insight into the lives of the teachers.

The selection of the quotes from the different contexts allowed for exploration of the ways in which social contexts impact on teachers' understanding and management of diversity. From a critical theory point of view, the excerpts illustrated if and how teachers in varied school settings negotiated the reproduction of social values in schools. Critical theory offers a lens for understanding the role of schools in perpetuating and subverting the race, class and gender interests of state and society (Jansen, 2009). Furthermore, critical theory is on the side of the oppressed, aimed at seeing the world from the perspective of those denied human rights, economic access or racial justice.

Although critical theory offers a crucial body of knowledge in education, the problem with the theory - according to Ellsworth (1989) - is that it is less helpful in dealing with the issue of race in the classroom than in empowering the marginalized in school and society by giving them a voice and recognition. Critical theory tends to gloss over the complexities of power and inequality represented in the classroom. In South Africa, post

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1994, teachers are confronted with human beings in their classroom representing both sides of the race, class, language, culture, and religion divide; these educators therefore face the dilemma of developing a pedagogy appropriate to such a context. The classrooms are deeply divided places where contending histories and rival lived experiences are placed in the same teaching space, adding to the challenges for teachers.

Moreover, it must be remembered that these teachers are not automatically empowered with superhuman skills to address the problems of an unequal society. On the contrary, they themselves are products of this society, human beings entering the classroom with educational baggage of their own, and this must surely have implications for critical education (Jansen, 2009).

It follows therefore that it is not the curriculum policy – underpinned by social justice that is meant to tackle issues of social power - that is at stake in the classroom; what is at stake, are the learners and teachers with their respective social and personal background and histories. They enter the classroom with knowledge to be engaged, challenged and transformed. As depicted in the stories of the participants, teachers do not come with one story of the past, a common understanding of diversity, or a shared approach to managing diversity in the classroom. They have different perceptions, with some forms of commonalities that may constitute a starting point for a pedagogy dealing with diversity in the classroom post 1994.

The questionnaire explored teachers' conceptions of diversity, the influences on their understanding, the issues they deal with at school, their interventions at classroom level, and their feelings about changes in South African education. These questions were intended to elicit preliminary findings of the two research questions and to generate analytic categories that could be probed in the subsequent round of data gathering. The quotes presented illustrate examples of the responses provided by the participants who completed the questionnaire.

The findings show that the diversity of classrooms presents teachers with an array of challenging issues, and that many teachers lack the personal knowledge and other resources to deal with the issues (race, language, social, economic, cultural) shaped by the unjust history of South Africa. A face-value analysis of the challenging issues supports this finding from most research on diversity associated with schools (Banks et al, 2001; Ball, 2000; Dolby, 2000; Grant and Sleeter, 1997).

4.3   TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSITY

The first question asked is about teachers' understanding of diversity. The full range of responses is listed below, in Table 4.1. It was interesting to note that the concept of diversity was understood very differently by the teachers in this study. The teachers presented a diverse understanding of diversity which included issues of race, economic differences, poverty, cultural diversity, different languages and religions, varied learning and teaching, lack of resources and just generally understanding things differently. It is worth noting that the teachers from former coloured schools cited issues of race, language, religion and a dearth of resources being challenging issues, discussed later in the thesis. Teachers in former black schools mentioned the issue of resources and learning styles while teachers in former white schools cited race, language and learning abilities as challenging factors.

The range of responses may be illustrated by the following quotations. For instance, a coloured female teacher working in a former coloured school in the East District of the Western Cape Education Department formulated her understanding of diversity as follows:

> *This would include issues such as cultural differences, ethnic differences, social differences, language differences and, conceptually, how people understand things differently* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another coloured female teacher employed at a similar school in the Central District of the Western Cape offered the following definition:

> *Diversity means to be different in comparison with your social upbringing, your intellectual skills and cognitive methods of thinking and working. It ranges from being diverse in your culture, religion, language, beliefs and values. The adoption of all under one umbrella could be very challenging and daunting a task to me as an educator especially under trying and difficult circumstances. The changes are happening very fast in education. I think for the better* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another female coloured teacher from the South District stated that:

> *Diversity to me means variety, differences whether it is in culture, language, beliefs, values or skills etc. Diversity could be an exciting challenge and it requires an educator to be knowledgeable, resourceful as well as skillful. My belief is that human beings are created equally, male/female, but are different because of socio-economic backgrounds, their culture, tradition and there are many other factors which contribute to the way you manage yourself and how you deal with others that are different to yourself* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Responding to the question, the white female teacher teaching at a former white school in the North District stated that:

> *Diversity is across all aspects: religion, culture, creed, race, gender, ability. It is acknowledging that we are all different and need to be accepted for who we are* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The black female teacher said that:

> *The word diversity means changing of many different things in our education, for example OBE system that has been implemented. We also talk of cultural diversity, which is about different cultures in our societies* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

According to the written responses from the teachers, diversity includes race, economic differences, different cultures, different religions, the many languages, social issues, different learning abilities of the learners, gender, physical differences, showing respect for the other and the creation of equal opportunities for all learners. The different conceptions resonate with the argument that personal conceptual frameworks are important aspects of how people approach diversity (Banks, 1995; Cushner et al, 1992). From a policy point of view, this suggests that interventions emanating from the strategies as outlined in the Manifesto on Values in Education may need to be targeted to particular forms of diversity. In particular, the strategies that focus on the curriculum; infusing the classroom with the culture of human rights; making arts and culture part of the curriculum; putting history back in the curriculum; teaching religion education and making multilingualism happen and using sport to shape the social bonds and nation building at schools are the primary means of instilling skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in young people. A sense of equity, social justice and equality in schools is therefore the thematic thread.

The following section provides an account of some of the key issues mentioned by the 50 participants. The main ideas and issues were coded and categorised as summaries and are presented in the following tables.

Table 4.1:   Teachers' understanding of the concept – diversity

CATEGORY	CODES
Race	• Different race groups • White, black, coloured, indian groups • Black children, xhosa speaking • Coloured and black children
Economic Difference	• Socio-economic levels • Access to education and social development • Socio-economic conditions and backgrounds • Different class groups • Poor and rich children
Culture	• Diverse cultures • Different value systems • Different views and mean of expression • Different traditions
Religion	• Many religions • Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus • Belief systems
Language	• Different languages • Language abilities
Social	• Understand where children live • Different backgrounds • Different qualities of life • Different characteristics • Different life styles • Social skills of learners
Learning Skills	• Handicaps • Learning disabilities and barriers • Different skills • Different learning and teaching styles • Different forms of assessment
Gender	• Different sex • Girls and boys • Sexual orientation
Physiological	• Physical features
Equal Opportunity	• Inclusion policy • Equal rights for all • Diverse groups enrich the teaching environment • Provide for all • Transformation of education • Able to attend school • Created equal
Stereotypes/Perceptions	• Their culture is different • They can dance and sing • Whites are better • They can't speak English • We are different people
Conflict	• Tension because of communication • Racial conflict • Not understanding one another
Respect	• Appreciate differences • Respect the other

4.4   WHAT INFLUENCES TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSITY

This section presents the responses of the participants in relation to what influenced or informed their understanding of diversity. The participants tabled mainly the notion of role models, historical issues, geographical settings, developments within South Africa, legislation, and personal experiences as aspects that underpinned their understanding of diversity. The following quotes illustrate the varied influences.

In relation to historical and geographical factors, the quote by a coloured teacher:

> *My upbringing. I was born in District 6. There was lots of diversity. We were then moved to the Cape Flats to sandy and unfriendly conditions. How sad it was for all of us* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Looking at developments in South Africa:

> *I experienced the bad ways of apartheid and the actions to overcome apartheid. My thoughts were influenced by the changes in our transformed government, society, education, economics and history* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

This quote comes from a coloured female teacher at a school in Athlone, Cape Town, a suburb classified coloured before changes in South Africa.

Historical and personal factors also featured in this study. The following quote by a coloured female teacher teaching in Mitchell's Plain, a township specially developed for coloured people prior to 1994 illustrates the hardships and pain.

> *I was born, raised and received my schooling in Grassy Park. I lived in a tent, a*

shack and kombi in Grassy Park, Cape Town. Being a member of a poor family with my stepfather being the only breadwinner. He had no formal qualification and was a fisherman by trade. My mother had to rear seven children as a single parent and experienced many problems. If not financial, it was social or emotional problems. I did not enjoy many privileges but my parents sent me to college to become a teacher. Many values were instilled, although I was raised as a coloured and my parents addressed "whites" as baas [boss] and madam. I received spiritual training as from the age of 15 and spoke Afrikaans at home. This makes me different from others, yet I'm hardworking and intelligent (Questionnaire, August 2004).

In reference to legislation and policies developed to guide curriculum development processes post 1994, the white teacher from a predominately white suburb stated that the:

Readings that I've done, documents received from WCED and media reports (Questionnaire, August 2004),

informed her thoughts on diversity.

Furthermore a black teacher said:

I have been influenced by the educational changes implemented by the education department, and the different policies that we need to focus on (Questionnaire, August 2004).

She also spoke about role models, such as:

Political, community and religious leaders who stood up for what was right. The political involvement and thoughts of some of my teachers and family members also shaped my thoughts (Questionnaire. August 2004.

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From the quotes it appears that historical factors, their childhood experiences, the community where they lived, political and educational changes and key influential people had a direct and indirect influence on the teachers' understanding of diversity.

Table 4.2: Influences on teachers' understanding of diversity

CATEGORY	CODE
Role model	• Exposure to politically conscious teachers • Parents who spoke about diversity issues • Political and community leaders and activists
History	• Education transformation in SA • Political changes since 1994 • Social changes in country • Apartheid education
Personal experience	• Schooling and educational training • Social environment and upbringing • Political involvement • Personal philosophy

For some, the exposure to individuals who articulated the importance of respecting others regardless of race, gender or creed and acted within the arena of justice influenced their position on diversity. Another factor was the policy of apartheid that purported to justify all forms of discrimination and allowed for the hegemonic control of others by the minority in South Africa. In addition, the phasing in of the new democracy with a constitution that promotes human rights, democracy and respect for diversity prepared some foundation for understanding the nature of diversity.

The teachers' view of diversity is likely to be bound with their personal experiences, which according to Gardner (2001) involves the individuals' experience of society. Their understanding of diversity was influenced by their schooling and tertiary training as well as their social environment and

upbringing. For some, their involvement in political activities and personal philosophies were influential factors.

4.5 THE ISSUES OF DIVERSITY TEACHERS DEAL WITH AT SCHOOL AND IN THE CLASSROOM

Under this section of the questionnaire the following categories regarding the types of diversity the respondents dealt with at school and in the classroom, emerged strongly. The issues included race, economic, language, religion, resources and learning issues.

In this study it was interesting to note the link between language and race. Learners who do not conform to, or cope with, the dominant language are seen to have a language 'deficiency', and diversity is seen as a language 'problem'. Alexander (1989) observed that racial prejudice and racism are without doubt reinforced and maintained by language barriers. He argues that to eliminate racial prejudice and racism means breaking down language barriers (Alexander, 1989).

A coloured female teacher from Mitchell's Plain, whose home language is Afrikaans believed that differences of race and language caused problems at school.

> *Our school is faced with language barriers, where the home language is English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, yet the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is English. Our Xhosa learners are experiencing adapting problems and sometimes humiliated and rejected because of their race and language. This disturbs me because of my own background* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A coloured teacher at a school that caters for mainly coloured children but who also has black children in her class stated that:

> *At the moment, I think that we have a*
> *problem with the language issue. Parents*
> *put their children into an English medium*
> *class when these children have no concept*
> *of the language. The children's parents,*
> *grandparents speak one of the 11 official*
> *languages as a home language. I feel that*
> *the children should be exposed to a second*
> *or third language gradually, with the help of*
> *the parents and taught the basics in their*
> *home language. Not all the educators know*
> *a third or fourth language and this poses a*
> *problem where learning is concerned*
> (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A coloured female teacher at a school in a predominantly middle class coloured area;

> *My school has to deal with multi-lingualism*
> *and multi-racialism because we have*
> *learners from different sections of society.*
> *Such as Indians, coloureds, blacks and*
> *whites. They speak English, Afrikaans, Hindi,*
> *Gujarati, Xhosa and Sotho* (Questionnaire,
> August 2004).

According to a white teacher,

> *Being in a predominantly white suburb,*
> *racism is always or often an issue. Although*
> *not seen as such by the school and*
> *management. Parents are inclined to*
> *immediately label a problem as racial, when*
> *for example a child might be experiencing*
> *learning problems. The parents feel we are*
> *picking on them because they are of another*
> *race. Former model C schools [HOA] are*
> *seen as the only schools where "racism" can*
> *occur. Some of the learners also struggle*
> *with language but we are able to cope with it.*
> (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Economics was also a dominant issue, with school fees and technical resources being a concern expressed. A coloured teacher at one of the poorer schools expressed:

> *Some of our learners are also quite poor and can't pay school fees. Morale is low as the financial constraints make them bitter, angry and frustrated* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

While a black teacher stated that:

> *Our school is facing overcrowded classrooms and the lack of many facilities and we cannot afford to improve the situation because we are also faced with poverty and unemployment* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another factor in most of the schools was religion. According to a coloured teacher at a middle class coloured school,

We also have many different religions, backgrounds from Atheism, Catholics, Anglicans, Moslems, DRC, NG, Deewali, no church/religion too (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another comment on religion by a white teacher was;

> *We also have different religions at our school and still need to understand it. Our Assemblies are mainly Christian though* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Many also wrote about the social issues they have at their schools. A coloured teacher stated:

> *With regard to social issues, some children come to school hungry. They are unable to function and we need to supply them with sandwiches* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another coloured teacher from a poor community commented:

> *We have learners who have social issues on their agenda such as coming from broken homes, abused homes, poor homes, one parent homes and quite a lot of them are living with their grandparents who are pensioners. We have bad behaviour/ ill*

disciplined learners who are not living in a structured social atmosphere with norms and values or even etiquette regarding respect for fellow human beings etc. Irresponsible/ illiterate parents who just live each day as it comes (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Furthermore a white teacher also spoke about the varied learning needs of the learners, and wrote about the inclusive education policy. She stated that:

In terms of Inclusive education – parents are insisting that the children attend a mainstream school even if we cannot deliver the best service in the interest of the child. Some also struggle with language, but we are able to work on it (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Table 4.3: Diversity issues at school/in the classroom

CATEGORY	CODES
Race	• Apartheid history • Race issues • Political influences • Ethnicity
Economic	• Poverty • Payment of school fees • Unemployment • State grants • Economic barriers • Limited finances • Affordability and access
Culture	• Diverse cultures • Different customs and traditions • Different festivals
Religion	• Different religions • Many religious festivals
Language	• Speak different languages • Communication a problem • Use of different forms of communication
Social	• Social issues • Dysfunctional homes • Gangsterism • Violence and abuse • Health issues, HIV/AIDS and nutrition • Ill-disciplined learners • Disrespectful children
Learning Styles	• Unable to cater for all learners • Learning and physical disabilities • Slow learners • Classification and grouping of learners

Gender	• Abilities of boys and girls • Attitudes of boys and girls • Mixed sex groups
Physiological	• Different physical features • Physical abilities
Stereotypes/Perceptions	• Xhosa culture, speak loudly • Certain groups like to group together • Whites have accents
Conflict	• Forms of miscommunication • Racial tension • Offer conflict resolution
Resources	• Lack of infrastructure • Lack equipment and material • Large classes

The teachers spoke about race in terms of cultural differences. They also spoke about equal opportunities and espoused a commitment to equal treatment for all learners. Economics referred to issues such as poverty, school fees, and the high rate of unemployment and state grants that parents receive. These were seen as economic barriers that limit affordability and access to opportunities.

Culture was linked to the notion of traditions, cultural beliefs, religions, festivals and different belief systems. While the term culture was used rather freely by the participants, the negative connotation of the concept as used to describe another race is embedded in South Africa's apartheid history. Many tend to label and stereotype - a practice which is prevalent in a society that fosters superficial misconceptions of social groups. In relation to critical theory, these misapprehensions are to be addressed through a process of re-socialisation aimed at critically understanding the social, political, cultural and economic history that have shaped the thoughts of people.

Language presented challenges as different languages were spoken at schools resulting in communication challenges. This sometimes manifested in racial conflict requiring varied forms of conflict resolution interventions.

In relation to social issues, the teachers mainly mentioned the poor and unhygienic conditions that children from townships need to endure. The prevalence of HIV and other illnesses ascribed to poor nutrition and sanitation were also mentioned as disturbing factors.

These communities lacked adequate facilities for recreational purposes and recorded the poor conditions of facilities damaged due to vandalism. The schools also become objects of this destructive behaviour. Furthermore, they referred to the varied forms of abuse - physical, emotional and sexual –that the children whom they teach are subjected to.

The category learning style included the inability to cater for all learners in the class, ranging from learners with physical disabilities, to mental challenges and emotional problems. Mixing the groups in terms of abilities and gender was used as a means to keep learning a stimulating activity and as a way to challenge stereotypes.

As illustrated, diversity is a factor in all school communities, having implications for classroom practice which through the years has been handled through policies such as assimilation and segregation (Cross, 1991). While the current education policy promotes the importance of social justice, the data however reveal that diversity is mainly handled through forms of multicultural education in the classroom. The focus seems to be on the acknowledgment and appreciation of differences between cultural groups. The point is made that diversity should be valued, respected and encouraged, revealing a cultural pluralistic approach as suggested by Cordeiro et al (1994).

The teachers' perceptions are that learners have many needs and are challenged when having to, for example, learn in a language that is not their home language. The data revealed that learner background and cultural experiences need to be recognised as important to the process of learning. According to Banks (1992) learners in a diverse school setting often find that they have to question some aspects of their own culture, as

it seems to them out of step. If learners are treated in ways that show that their language is awkward, habits strange and backgrounds deprived, they are likely to become negative and uncooperative (McCarthy, 1997; Delpit, 1995).

There is growing evidence that issues such as racism and differences of home language and religious affiliation among the learners are not always managed easily in schools. McCarthy (1997) and May (1995) argue that it is simplistic and naïve to believe that multiculturalism will put an end to racism. Schools with learners from different backgrounds without a vision to deal with it will manifest as uncertain and in need of support (van der Westhuizen, 2002). The current findings show that because of the complexities of diversity, programmes need to be carefully selected and cognizance be taken of differences and that for example, different religions not be seen as a threat but in fact be an opportunity for enrichment.

Diverse schools in the new South Africa are a reality and punctuated with many challenges. However, diversity is an educational opportunity that can be enriching for learners and teachers if managed in the correct way. The classroom is an ideal space for differences to be examined and for the teacher to be compassionately involved in the process. This allows for constructive confrontation and transformation of knowledge, as - according to Jansen (2009) - the moral world is a lot more complex than critical theory suggests.

4.6   TEACHER INTERVENTIONS AT CLASSROOM LEVEL

Teachers named a wide range of interventions that they use to manage diversity at classroom level. Broadly speaking, these interventions can be classified into three categories, namely multiculturalism, social activities and teaching and learning styles as summarized in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4:   Diversity management in the classroom.

CATEGORY	CODE
Multiculturalism	• Multi-cultural lessons • Recognition of all spoken languages • Celebrating of festivals • Sharing of cultural rituals and traditions • Heritage celebration • Respect for diversity stories
Social Activities	• Play sport • Involve in life skills • Conflict resolution activities • Different games and recreation activities • Personal development and health awareness
Learning and Teaching Styles	• Differentiated groups • Ability groups • Concrete to abstract teaching • Peer teaching • Recognition of individual needs

In terms of multiculturalism, the teachers spoke about offering multi-cultural lessons, the recognition of all spoken languages and the celebration of festivals to understand the rituals and traditions of others. They also placed emphasis on heritage and showing respect for diversity stories. In this regard, they termed multiculturalism as a way of expressing culture where different forms of art, literature, food, dress codes, languages and religions are showcased.

In dealing with religion, a coloured Foundation Phase teacher stated that:

> *We have two prayers, one for each religion at snack time and I tell them moral stories in the morning. I tell them to respect their peers regardless of religion* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Interventions related to language saw an array of possibilities. According to a coloured Foundation Phase teacher;

> *At the moment an issue is language. I get in a parent to help – or I have to show and tell. This involves, where the child says what it is and I tell him/her the English word. Songs and verses are done in three languages to accommodate all learners. Having more*

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resources would be helpful (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The coloured female Intermediate Phase teacher stated that:

> *We have a special reading period to encourage reading and communication, especially English. We also offer some Xhosa* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Furthermore the theme "Lets Celebrate our Differences" seems to dominate the interventions in schools. A white teacher commented:

> *I also plan lessons that are multicultural etc. We look at different religions, celebrate the festivals and discuss the different foods and cultures* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A coloured Intermediate Phase female teacher offered similar thoughts:

> *We acknowledge differences by including a theme called 'let's celebrate'. Children are encouraged to come and tell how they celebrate any festival be it birth, weddings, birthdays, religious days* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The participants highlighted social activities as a sound means of dealing with diversity issues and tabled the role of sport, different games including indigenous games and recreational activities as ways to break down social barriers and build social cohesion. The respondents also presented the role of life skill programmes to develop values such as respect, personal development, self image, conflict skills, health and social awareness as important for diversity management in the classroom. Furthermore, nutrition programmes also took place at some schools. A coloured teacher commented:

> *There is plenty of poverty in the community where I teach so the children are encouraged to share. The school receives a funding scheme where we are supplied with bread, jam and peanut butter so the children*

receive sandwiches (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another Intermediate Phase female coloured teacher said that:

> *During life skills we talk about being special and unique and to respect each other. We also encourage the children to play games and have regular social activities for learners to interact, for example sports days, fun days and extra-mural outings* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

In relation to the category Teaching and Learning Styles the respondents spoke about being sensitive to placing learners into differentiated and ability groups and to engage learners in multi-modality forms of teaching. On occasion the teachers paired the learners where a bright learner would support a slow learner, and the learners were grouped according to a slow and fast group so that the needs of each sub-group could be met separately, while the other sub-group is occupied with some other task. In terms of language, the learners were deliberately mixed in order to overcome divisions. They suggested that lesson plans must be prepared to recognise the needs of individuals, offer space for peer teaching and show learning progression. A Foundation Phase teacher reported:

> *I do peer teaching and I seek help for these learners who need help. I mix my groups so that I have Xhosa-speakers and English-speakers which is a way to overcome divisions. At our school we have regular workshops with parents to talk about how best to assist learners with language and other learning problems. We also meet regularly as a staff to look at different forms of learning and teaching interventions* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

One of the black teachers said that her intervention includes:

> *Arranging the classroom in a way to accommodate all the learners, grouping the learners and creating some learning*

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> *atmosphere in the classroom, difficult*
> *because of limited space and resources. I*
> *sometimes pair them, like a slow and bright*
> *learner where the bright learner helps the*
> *slow one. I also group them according to*
> *ability – I put the fast learners in a group and*
> *the slow ones in a group with separate tasks*
> (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A white teacher at a former model C school stated:

> *I have a policy in my class and the learners*
> *know that everyone gets treated according to*
> *their needs. So if a child goes to remedial,*
> *we acknowledge that that is what he needs.*
> *If he needs a hug, we accept that too. There*
> *are times I group my learners so that I can*
> *meet the needs of each group separately. So*
> *while I focus on one group the other group is*
> *occupied with some task* (Questionnaire,
> August 2004).

The account of the teachers' interventions at classroom level illuminates
some of the dilemma, contradictions and tensions of diversity education in
South Africa. The study also pointed to the varied forms of resources
available at the contextually different schools. While all the teachers were
enthusiastically embracing diversity, the interventions in general did not
move beyond cultural pluralism or address issues of social justice.

In many cases the multi-cultural lessons spoken about were nothing more
than "add on's" and not presented in a critical manner. For the most part,
they took the form of the occasional celebration of different cultural and
religious festivals such as Ramadaan, Divaali, Good Friday and others.
The other forms of integrating the notion of diversity included the infusion
into themes related to "Similarities and Differences", where traditions and
dress codes are displayed.

From the responses offered, it was obvious that the lessons were merely
"tokenism", and not necessarily premised on social justice and equality as
the provisions for dealing with diversity and were presented in a rather ad

hoc manner. As a consequence of knowledge gaps, identifying the required content for the specific concepts and planning lessons in a more critical manner seem not to be an easy task for these teachers. As reported by the teachers, lack of planning in terms of diversity was a rather common occurrence.

Given the increasingly diverse needs of learners within constantly-changing contexts in South Africa, teachers have to continually adjust to how they must present issues related to diversity in the classroom. Learners that do not form part of the "main" language, race and class streams may continue to feel peripheral and continue to experience a sense of having lower status within curriculum processes.

The evidence of the emerging data points to the necessity of looking at the needs for diversity programmes and how they are conceived and implemented if the vision of "respecting the other" in a democratic society with new values is to be realised.

4.7 HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND EDUCATION?

The following reflects the participants' responses regarding their attitude to change in South Africa and the changes they have had to implement in their classrooms and schools. This is a combination of the two sub-questions asked in relation to changes in the education system.

A coloured teacher stated:

> *I feel positive about the changes. We live in one country and it's really time to get to know the people we share it with. What better way to start, at school!* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another coloured teacher felt similarly:

> *I feel good about the changes; it will help if
> we all have fewer learners in a class. This
> would make a huge difference to the
> profession. I also feel empowered now that I
> am constantly learning how to adapt to the
> changes* (Questionnaire, August 2004), but
> further expressed that:

> *I feel tired, bogged down with all the
> administration work. It takes up most of my
> teaching time* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Some ambivalence was also expressed. A coloured teacher serving a
large coloured community stated:

> *Yes and no. Resources and support are not
> easily available and makes teaching difficult.
> Management also finds it difficult to adapt to
> change itself and no follow up is done after
> training is received. The training is not
> always adequate with limited time allocated
> for diversity issues. Change is a challenge
> which I enjoy.*

> *I feel good as it has empowered me to
> negotiate, and I'm able to share my
> knowledge and skills. I have accomplished
> many successes in my reading programme.
> Others can no more talk down to me as I
> have developed and am confident about my
> new acquired knowledge and experiences*
> (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A black teacher also expressed a negative and positive response:

> *I feel negative because the existing
> government expects more from the teachers
> although they are not all trained for these
> new changes. The SA education is changing
> now and again and teachers are not having
> enough facilities to do these things.
> Teaching materials are not enough for our
> community school (black community), things
> like school library, no computers and
> computer rooms* (Questionnaire, August
> 2004).

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> *I feel good about the changes because it gives me more experience to deal with learners' problems and help them where they experience some problem in their learning areas. They are also (learners) gaining experience to their learning because now our education is more advanced and we are just the facilitators, other information is coming from their side* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A white teacher commented:

> *I am very positive about the changes. The school is a more real micro-community of SA. I need to instill in children that we need to accept and tolerate one another in order for the outside community to prosper. Regarding the curriculum, sometimes the changes have been too many, too quickly, only to change again. This has been most frustrating. We haven't always had the support, guidance or workshops to facilitate a smooth transition. We had a lot to learn, develop our own programmes and to experience things on our own. We were not always sure whether we were doing the right things. This was not a nice feeling* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The respondents were generally positive about the changes taking place in South Africa, but highlighted systematic and systemic concerns that should be addressed to ensure effective policy implementation. Respondents felt that an understanding of the context of teaching, the environment and adequate facilities are crucial for learning and teaching, and ultimately the delivery of quality education.

Generally, the respondents acknowledged the positive process of change but felt that the macro picture did not support what is needed for change to happen in the classroom. They recorded that they were expected to introduce many new ideas at the same time, regardless of the varied context of teaching; this led to frustration and resentment. The support mechanisms were perceived as a challenge mostly in relation to the

nature of diversity. School management strategies have an important role to play in assisting teachers with curriculum challenges. They perceived the lack of well-organized management structures and systems as a source of their teaching problems. Other research also identifies the crucial role of education administrators, heads of schools and school management teams as crucial in supporting teachers (Weiss, 1999). The individual approach to issues of diversity and the lack of a clearly defined school approach seems to have contributed much towards the feelings of a lack of administrative support that the teachers experienced in this study.

In spite of the challenges and problems, these teachers reported positive experiences as far as their interactions with learners were concerned. They reported enjoying teaching because of the positive relationships that they had created with their learners. They indicated that accepting differences was great for nation building and that it was important to acknowledge that all learners have the potential to learn, regardless of the barriers they may experience. Characteristics cited as making teaching for diversity better included engendering an empowering environment where both learners and teachers would have the space to explore and experience differences and talk about education issues that promote or hinder diversity. The point was made that introducing more inclusive learning and teaching practices would allow for exposure to other cultures which, in turn, would allow for the development of multiple perspectives on diversity. This was seen as a means of making a positive contribution to improving the life chances of learners.

Respondents reflected on systematic and systemic issues regarding change. The readiness of the school environment to implement change is limited. These changes include infrastructure and resources (learning and teaching, finance, human, technical). Although the willingness is there to implement change, it would seem that the policies are not aligned with school-based realities of large classes and socio-economic issues, and teachers generally felt overwhelmed at the many new policies expected to

be implemented at the same time. Dealing with large class sizes was a challenge as described by the teachers. The teaching of large classes was associated with experiences of problems in controlling the whole class, classroom noise, discipline, time management and limits presenting lessons in a variety of ways. As a result, learners whose needs, abilities and cognitive profiles deviate from the norm do not get due attention, limiting effective learning and active participation by all children (Tomlinson, 1999). Apart from the large class sizes, the poor and limited teaching resources were constraints concerns mentioned. The teachers' experiences of classroom management in this study are generally consistent with findings of several other studies related to education in schools in South Africa (Nasson, 1990; Christie et al, 2004; Chisholm, 2006).

The respondents further recorded that under-resourced communities are not able to support change while management teams at schools are also struggling to offer strategic guidance. Furthermore, they highlighted inadequate preparation and training in the new curriculum as a matter of concern. The teachers received limited support or assistance in the planning of their work for dealing with diversity. The trend that emerged from the questionnaire responses is that dealing with diversity was characterised by individual work, with limited collegial interaction, and limited or no support or feedback from management.

Despite having some negative views of the process of change in the South African education system, the respondents insisted that the change is needed to ensure an integrated South Africa.

4.8   IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN THE CLASSROOM

The opinions expressed regarding changes to classroom practice revealed the many challenges the teachers needed to contend with in terms of large classes, lack of resources, planning procedures,

assessment processes, administration overload, discipline issues and teaching methodology.

In particular, the shortage or lack of teaching and learning resources was identified as a characteristic of the school context in this study. Most of the teachers reported that the current school funding was inadequate for the general running of the school. Therefore activities had to be prioritized among the many school needs. From the responses, the resource constraints were very obvious. Teachers also experienced a lack of reference materials in relation to diversity. These shortcomings, along with many others, were reported to affect the teaching and learning experiences in the classroom.

Although the teachers identified with the process of change, they had differences with the policies they were expected to implement. They commented that they felt unsure about what was expected of them in terms of the new curriculum and uneasy about lesson planning because of the continuous changes in the curriculum design processes. This raised the issue of discontentment about the changes they were expected to implement in the classroom without the necessary training and support. Although they felt that the new curriculum presented them with sound opportunities for learning and teaching, it has shortcomings that require intervention for the changes to benefit all learners. Furthermore, they contended that socio-economic factors are issues that impact tremendously on a culture of learning and teaching with disadvantaged communities being unable to support the financial-implication changes required at schools. These challenges have an impact on how the teachers are able to deal with the concept of diversity in the classroom.

The classic and widely cited gap between policy and practice (Flores, 2001; Hauge, 2000) was a recurring issue emerging from the responses. In general, the teachers felt that the policy was not in keeping with the varied teaching demands in schools. Teachers felt that they required a practical training course in order to meet the everyday realities of

classroom teaching and the demands of managing diversity. They perceived their orientation session on diversity as being inadequate and find integrating diversity into their teaching a challenge.

There is no doubt that the teachers need support in this journey as they not only confront their own prejudices, but also their limitations in terms of classroom practice. Teachers reported that there were limited opportunities for professional development in relation to diversity management in the schools and by the education department. It is reported that while many curriculum workshops are conducted, workshops were not necessarily targeting the way teachers deal with diversity. In addition, none of the schools offered a diversity management plan, and limited background knowledge of diversity echoed in the teachers' experiences. The experience of the teachers in this study in relation to support is different from that reported in most of the literature on multi-cultural education, which is mostly from countries in the West. Although the diversity issues which emerged are rather similar, these teachers had limited preparation, lack of reference material and strategies to deal with diversity in the classroom.

4.9   CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the findings of the questionnaire and yielded that the teachers understood diversity in terms that included: race, religion, social issues, customs, culture, language, socio-economic matters, learning abilities, and disabilities. In terms of their management, their interventions were generally in the form of multiculturalism, social activities and different teaching and learning styles. Furthermore, it also highlighted the challenges related to classroom management.

The next chapter reports on the data collected from the interviews and focus group discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the data generated from the in-depth interviews with ten teachers and the focus group discussion conducted with five teachers drawn from the sample of 50 teachers.

The interviews and focus group discussion used the same structure as the questionnaire but some additional questions were added. The following were the issues probed with the teachers:

1.   How they conceive diversity

2.   What has informed their understanding of diversity

3.   What the diversity issues are they deal with at school and in the classroom

4.   How have they intervened around the issues of diversity at school

5.   What their personal views on the issue of diversity are

6.   How they plan their lessons to deal with diversity

7.   Whether the curriculum policies have been helpful

8.   How they feel about the curriculum policies

9.   What additional resources are needed to assist with interventions on diversity

10.   What the factors in their schools are that impact on the way they deal with these issues

11.   Other related issues in terms of diversity.

Much of the data generated through the interviews and focus group echoed the information gathered through the questionnaire. The presentation of data therefore runs the risk of apparent repetition. However, rather than summarizing the new data, it seemed important to report fully on the interviews and focus group in order to ensure transparency of data.

The first section of this chapter provides a narrative account of three of the ten interviews followed by some illustration of the key categories (drawn from all ten interviewed) and discussion aimed at addressing the research questions.

The second section documents the focus group and offers discussion on the questions asked during this session.

5.2   INTERVIEWS

Individual interviews were held with ten teachers, selected to represent the different socio-economic and geographical settings in the Western Cape. The purpose of selection and the context of learning and teaching are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. There were 16 questions of which the first five requested biographical information while the others were semi-structured questions. The interviews were transcribed verbatim (an example is presented in Appendix D) and subsequently grouped under the following headings: understanding of diversity, what informed understanding of diversity, diversity issues in the classroom and school, diversity management and resources. The interview transcripts were coded (the phrases highlighted) and categorised (blocks) as illustrated in the example. The extract in Appendix D shows the "rich" account of the research questions through the lens of one of the informants, a female teaching at a school in an area designated for coloureds prior to 1994.

Similar patterns and emerging new codes were also sought. Some sub-sections were incorporated into the main sections, given the similarity of the information gathered. This process was useful to analyse the data. The information gathered from the interviews confirmed the findings received from the questionnaire and provided additional information as discussed in this section of the thesis. Appendix E presents a table as a summary of the coding and clustering procedure used on all the interview data.

Although interviews were conducted with ten participants and compiled as illustrated in the summary tables, a section is presented that provides a narrative account of only three research participants interviewed, a strategy gleaned from Graven (2002). The reason for this is to provide an analysis using the rich data gathered to illustrate the experiences of certain of the teachers regarding diversity and the context that informed their positions. However, data sets for all the participating teachers were compiled, which included the information gathered from the questionnaires and the focus groups.

The data sets from the three participants were selected to demonstrate the nature, extent and complexity of diversity practices at schools. The rationale for the selection was to demonstrate the experiences of teachers teaching at the different former education departments in South Africa with their contrasting contexts. In qualitative research, selection is unavoidable and is informed by the overall purpose of the study (Carspecken, 1996). This study noted that contextual factors play an important role in influencing teaching and learning and it is for this reason that contrasting contexts were worth highlighting.

The interviews with the teachers yielded some key issues that they are confronted with at schools. The issues included: race, language, religion, poverty, social, learning styles and resources. It highlighted some of the particularities experienced by teachers in terms of historical and geographic location, former education department and socio-economic circumstances.

5.2.1 Experiences of teachers interviewed

The following is a narrative account of the responses of three teachers to the interview schedule. They taught at schools previously classified as white, coloured and black located in different geographic and socio-economic environments. The racial classification, a white male (HOA

school), coloured female (HOR school) and black female (DET school) is included to show how apartheid employment policy linked people to particular schools. The home languages were English (2 teachers) and Xhosa (1 teacher).

Teacher One

Teacher One, a white male who was interviewed in January 2005, taught at a school in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. He was a post level one teacher who received his schooling at white school and attended a college that trained white teachers. He taught physical education to the entire school and history at the Grades 6 and 7 levels. During the interview Teacher One presented a very calm disposition and was comfortable to talk about issues of diversity. He felt that the school was well managed, but that more could be done in terms of diversity.

The school was a former white school located in one of the suburbs of Cape Town reserved for whites during the apartheid era. There had been an influx of coloured and black children to the school since the early 2000s. The school was relatively big and had classes from grades one to seven. The average class size ranged from 30 to 35. The learners came from all three race groups and different religious backgrounds. English was the medium of instruction.

The teacher stated that although the school at which he was teaching had integrated racially, there was a predominance of coloured learners at the school.

> *We have predominantly coloured kids at our school,*
> *maybe 25 out of a class of 35, with a few black kids*
> *and the rest are white kids.*

In spite of the changes in the demographic profile of the school, the existing culture of the school remained steeped in traditions, systems and structures that existed prior to change in South Africa.

Although many more children from all races and various religions were admitted to the school, the school's assembly was still based on the Christian faith.

> *As far as religion goes I would guess that about 70% of the school follows what could be termed a Christian belief, about 25% Islam and about 5% Hindu or Jehovah Witness. I think we are coping relatively well with this issue although our assemblies are still Christian in their approach. We now have six teachers on our staff who are Moslem and I think this has helped to raise the status of Islam in the school.*

The teacher reported that in spite of the prevailing Christian approach to assemblies, there was space for other religious groups to express themselves. The teacher particularly acknowledged the commitment shown by the Muslim learners regarding their religion. As a white Christian male he had been educated and gained an understanding of the Ramadaan period, one of the critical pillars on which the Islam religion is based; he was impressed by the dedication and respect learners had for the holy month of Ramadaan.

The commitment of Muslim learners was further elaborated upon when the teacher provided an example of when the learners were on a camp and they continued their diligence in observing prayer time and stuck to eating "halaal" foods, especially prepared for them by parents or another Muslim person.

The teacher felt that his exposure to students from different races and religions during his studies assisted in providing him with a broader understanding of diversity. As a result he was in a better position to identify the gaps at his school and offer targeted interventions, an example he cited regarding horizontal discrimination by a coloured-on-coloured learner:

*The interesting issue we have had as far as racism,
was sometimes darker coloured kids would be
called kaffir by other coloured kids, which causes a
lot of resentment and anger and the kids are upset;
you sort of deal with it by talking about feelings, the
use of derogatory terms and how we treat each
other. Showing respect is important.*

In terms of physical infrastructure, the school facilities were considered as good; they include a school hall, swimming pool, tennis and netball courts and sport fields for soccer, hockey, rugby and cricket. It had a school library and the necessary technical infrastructure for administration. In addition to having the solid physical infrastructure the school also employed a social worker to deal with social-related, emotional and other life-skills-related issues. The remuneration of the social worker was paid out of school fees and the proceeds of fundraising efforts. This is an indication of the school's acknowledgement of the learner's holistic development:

*We have a social worker for three days at our
school and the SGB pays her salary, collected from
school fees.*

The lingua franca at the school was English and all lessons were conducted in English, although many of the black learners were English second-language speakers. This initially deterred the learners' confidence as it was difficult to solicit answers from these pupils. There was an assumption that in spite of the different language abilities, all learners had a uniform understanding of the lesson. The teacher noted that the English second-language speakers spoke freely within mixed groups with other same mother tongue learners in their home language and that during intervals groupings were still mainly linked to language and race. Although the black learners are able to communicate in English, the teacher acknowledged the challenges faced by English second-language learners, yet his comments suggest that they coped fine with being instructed in English. They continued to find support and perhaps comfort from socializing with learners from similar backgrounds where they could

communicate more freely in their mother tongue. Although the teacher did not seem insensitive as a person, it did appear that the school's processes showed little acknowledgement for why black children needed to find a "comfortable space".

> *Language isn't really a factor because almost all the kids speak English at school but all the black kids obviously speak Xhosa at home but are able to communicate in English. They do sometimes struggle but they are only a few.*

The teacher expressed that:

> *I do notice that during intervals the black kids, Xhosa-speaking kids, tend to stick together, regardless of grade, that is rather interesting.*

However, as the physical education teacher he commented that he is encouraged to see how a ball transcends all forms of barriers.

> *So when we play ball games, all just play together, it is amazing what a ball does.*

This raises various questions, for instance: Is it possible to speak of a desired level or degree of integration and, if so, how could such a standard be established? Is this merely a matter of learners from different demographic backgrounds interacting socially with one another, or are there any reliable indicators for assessing how well learners know and appreciate the similarities and differences between themselves and their classmates from different demographic backgrounds?

Teacher Two

Teacher Two was interviewed in February 2005. The teacher, who works in Khayelitsha (a black township), stated that the learners that she works with are confronted with many socio-economic issues and the lack of reading skills. She herself was schooled in the Eastern Cape under the

appalling conditions of the black education system and she indicated that had an impact on the teaching she provides.

Her experience of teaching in Khayelitsha was that of large classes, there was a lack of infrastructure and finances, and a culture of parental non-involvement with the learners' school life. Buildings were often vandalised and many children did not enjoy adequate nutrition and had health problems as a result.

> *My school has to deal with poverty that makes people or the community not able to meet their children's needs. They come to school hungry and ill and must sit in overcrowded classes with broken windows. We sometimes use containers.*

The school facilities were poor with only a sand pitch representing a playing field. In addition, litter was a concern. The school did not have a computer laboratory or a school library.

The teacher highlighted that many children who were not school-ready were sent to school. Even though some had attended pre-school, their pre-school teachers and caregivers were basically "babysitters" as they had not been trained to teach. She linked the poor foundation to learning problems at school, as the children are not stimulated to deal with the Foundation Phase curriculum. She confirmed that some of the learners were younger than 6 years old and not always able to cope with demands of the curriculum. Some would literally fall asleep during class time.

She indicated that parents choose to get their children admitted to Grade One, as the school fees are more affordable than paying pre-schools. This, however, posed a problem and challenge for teachers who need to employ different teaching modalities and approaches to accommodate the abilities in a rather under-resourced situation.

> *I group the learners according to their abilities, the strong ones and the slow ones, and I use lots of play as the younger ones can't cope with the work.*

The home life of children in this community was not set up for exposing children to the stimuli they need to cope with the Grade One curriculum. Many learners live in dire socio-economic conditions, in informal homes like shacks or crowded conditions and are not exposed to the wide range of stimuli that assists learning at schools.

> *Our children stay in shacks and most of their parents don't have work and food. They don't have books at home, so all the work must be done at school.*

While this teacher projected a very positive attitude towards the general changes in South Africa, she expressed that change has not cascaded down to where it really matters, namely the classroom, as not much improvement is evident in the conditions for black learners in township schools.

Teacher Three

Teacher Three, a coloured teacher was interviewed in February 2005. She expressed a view that her baggage of the past still lingers and hoped that future generations would have different experiences. She taught in Hanover Park, a former coloured school and an area faced with gang violence and poverty. The teacher conducts home visits to get a better understanding of her learners' circumstances and to interact with the parent/s, grandparent/s or custodians of the children. The majority of learners are from the surrounding area, so doing home visits also helps as parents do not always attend school meetings. She commended the approach as it creates a sound relationship with the parents and a good rapport with learners.

> *When you are dealing with large and diverse classes, it is good to know the home environment of your children. So I still do home visits. You are able*

*to talk to the [caregiver], they see that you care. This
helps with relationships.*

Unlike formerly white schools in privileged areas, which can afford to
appoint additional teachers to School Governing Body (SGB) funded
posts, historically disadvantaged schools are not able to afford the same
privilege. She stated:

> *As you know, the learners come from environments
> where parents are either unemployed or dependent
> on social grants, grandparents' pensions or the
> salary of a parent, sometimes only enough to cover
> the very basic household requirements. They can't
> even afford to pay the school fees. This places
> tremendous pressure on us who, besides having to
> work with large classes, few resources and added
> administration work, also need to show love and
> care for the children. We can't afford SGB posts like
> the white schools where the children pay high
> school fees.*

Furthermore, she referred to the social conditions that her school faces
and stated that the school engages in safety programmes and also offers
a primary nutrition programme. She claimed that many children do not
receive a proper meal at home, affecting their behaviour, concentration,
energy and therefore their learning abilities.

> *I teach in a community with many issues, poverty,
> drug and alcohol abuse, dysfunctional family
> systems, so we are involved in the Safe Schools
> Project for the department... we are also part of the
> primary nutrition programme as the children come to
> school hungry.*

She indicated that her exposure to the Barriers to Learning course at the
Cape Peninsula University of Technology has been most valuable and
has shown her:

> *that children are different, special and unique with
> many barriers. I need to plan differently because the
> children are at different levels with different
> abilities...they have taken our Learners with Special*

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> *Education Needs (LSEN) post away so we must*
> *help the children, they can't afford outside support.*

The language abilities and reading competencies of learners were factors that concerned the teacher. She commented that in planning her lessons she always attempted to accommodate the different abilities of learners and the barriers they may encounter, which is rather challenging given the number of learners in her class.

As an intervention strategy, reading time and special language classes were introduced.

> *Language is an obstacle at the moment; the children are exposed to so many different languages. I can only cope with two languages and can't liaise in Xhosa. We introduced a Xhosa/English communication class where Basic English and Xhosa are taught...the Xhosa speakers now feel at home.*
>
> *During our lessons we talk about the conflicts that arise because of sometimes racial tension and communication/language problems.*

According to the teacher, the unfortunate effects of the apartheid system manifests themselves in the occasional racist remarks of children, shaped by the attitudes of their parents. It was also observed that:

> *Xhosa-speaking children stick together, few intermingle. This is because they only speak Xhosa at home so they are more comfortable to group with language group during intervals. They tend to only speak English in class.*

Being a former coloured school it always had children who followed the Christian faith as well as those who practised the Muslim religion.

> *We have Christian children and Moslems, but now we also have different cultural traditions which has been most interesting.*

She felt that the training regarding the new curriculum was not adequate, but saw the possibilities the new curriculum presented in dealing with diversity in terms of life skills development. She stated that the sometimes complex jargon was not easy to comprehend and many left the training sessions organized by the education department quite confused. She admitted that she did not readily think of planning her lessons with diversity in mind.

Drawing from these narratives and the data collected from the seven other participants interviewed, the following summary of the interview schedule is presented, with a focus on the main research questions, "How do teachers understand diversity?" and "How do the teachers deal with diversity in the classroom?".

5.2.2 Conceptions of diversity

Asked what they understood by the term diversity, the repondents referred to matters related to race, economic difference, culture, language, religion, social issues, learning skills, gender, physiological factors, equal opportunity, stereotypes/perceptions, conflict and respect.

Discussions around race, economic difference, gender and equal opportunity placed emphasis on differences and discrimination people suffer because of the colour of their skins, economic class and their gender classification. This point to unequal access to opportunities, services and a desirable quality of life.

Under the categories culture, religion and language they expressed that different belief systems exist and that many cultures make up society. It was also articulated that South Africa comprises many religions and languages which should be catered for in a way that allows for all forms of religion and language to be respected.

In terms of social aspects the respondents spoke about different social and health backgrounds, the communities where people live and the different upbringing of children. They also highlighted the diverse backgrounds of the learners and the many social problems that confront communities.

When dealing with learning skills the respondents expressed the different abilities of learners in terms of emotions, physical and intellectual abilities. They tabled the importance of acknowledging the different learning abilities and styles of learners and to plan so that all learners may succeed. Furthermore, they articulated many stereotypes and generalisations made by others and saw the need to deal with conflict situations that arise due to race, communication, class and perceptions. In particular, they described the need to show respect for the other as crucial when dealing with diversity.

Similar to the opinions expressed in the questionnaire, the participants again expressed a broad understanding of diversity characterised by issues such as race, socio-economics, language, culture, religion, gender and learning skills. Here are illustrations of the understanding of some of the interviewees. Interestingly, although teachers came from different racial and/or religious backgrounds, they generally understood diversity similarly.

Hajira, a Muslim coloured teacher at a school situated in Mitchell's Plain (an area build for coloureds during apartheid) expressed her understanding as follows:

> *For me, diversity is about knowing that we have differences in language, gender, economic background, religions, traditions in South Africa and we need to know about it and show respect. It also includes handling all in the class as I don't just teach one child but many children* (Interview, February 2005).

Winnie, a coloured teacher in Mitchell's Plain, remarked:

> *Well I would say diversity includes issues of race,*
> *language, religion, economics, culture but we have*
> *problems about children having problems with*
> *learning. So it is all about bringing the different*
> *groups together* (Interview, February, 2005).

Jacky, a white teacher at a school in Rondebosch, stated that:

> *Diversity includes issues of race, multi-faiths,*
> *different learning abilities, cultures and languages. It*
> *is important that the children are treated fairly and*
> *that we don't discriminate in terms of religion,*
> *gender, race. It is also about the different*
> *backgrounds which the child comes from* (Interview,
> March 2005).

5.2.3 What informed their understanding of diversity?

The data gathered under this section showed a similar set of codes to that of the questionnaire. The participants stated that different role models such as influential teachers, sometimes their parents, political and community leaders inspired them in terms of working towards change and social justice. Hazel, a coloured teacher stated:

> *I remember the political upheavals, the rallies where*
> *leaders spoke out against apartheid and now the*
> *many changes in our country* (Interview, March
> 2005).

Their understanding was also influenced by the socio-political and historical factors in South Africa and the changes that took place and are still taking place in South African Education.

In relation to what had influenced their thoughts on diversity, the teachers interviewed spoke about South Africa's political history. In the 70s and 80s the political terrain became opened up to mass struggles, with schools,

colleges and universities becoming sites and battlegrounds of struggle. Boycotts became a main strategy during that period aimed at taking control of schools. The actions during that period were due to a range of reasons; the changing social structure and racial division of labour, the massive expansion of inferior schooling under apartheid (Chisholm, 1994).

The constitutional framework was also introduced as a factor under this heading, while the teachers' involvement in socio-political campaigns, their educational training and personal philosophies had also informed their understanding of diversity.

5.2.4 Diversity issues at school and in the classroom

In this section, the codes were located within the following categories: racial, economical, multi-cultural, environmental, social, learning styles and resources.

- Racial – the participants spoke about race, the history of apartheid, the attitude of teachers and learners in terms of race and racist comments.

- Economical – factors such as access to finance, poor families and communities, affordability, unemployment and lack of skills.

- Multi-cultural – in this regard the teachers commented on the cultural traditions and customs, belief systems, the different languages spoken in schools, religions practiced and respecting the different festivals. Under culture, conflict of traditions and moral values underpinned by stereotypically held cultural beliefs prevailed.

- Environmental – this includes conditions in the communities and schools where the children live and learn.

- Social – revealed that issues such as dysfunctional homes, gangsterism, violence, physical and emotional abuse, trauma, health and social issues dominated this category.

- Learning style – in this regard teachers spoke about the need to accommodate the varied learning styles of all learners.

- Resources – issues such as ill-equipped schools, dilapidated buildings, lack of learning and teaching materials.

The teachers from the different departments identified different diversity issues, reflecting the differing conditions they had experienced. To illustrate, a teacher from a black school, identified four main issues. He had to confront issues such as poverty, social, learning styles and lack of resources. Another, from a previously coloured school which was integrated after 1994, described the issues as: racial, economical, multi-cultural, learning styles and lack of resources. A teacher from a former model C school that was granted special permission to admit learners of colour before 1994 presented racial and multi-cultural aspects as issues.

5.2.5 Dealing with diversity

The teachers listed a range of diversity issues they are expected to deal with at school and in the classroom. They presented some curricular ideas and activities to facilitate social and learning participation in the classroom. Below are some examples:

Mickey, a coloured teacher discussed some of the strategies they use to break down barriers:

> *Firstly we have the religious issue which many schools have, but we strictly adhere to the policy on religion where we don't promote any religious forms. Then also the race diversity issue where we need to deal with the Africans and the coloureds from the*

community so we place them in mixed racial groups... We also have special reading and English communication sessions (Interview, February 2005).

Hazel, a coloured teacher suggested that an approach that favours mixing learners from different backgrounds and working on their strengths had been beneficial in promoting integration. Of interest, this teacher suggested that young learners are less affected by racial background and tend to "mingle" more easily. However, special mention was made that communication creates opportunity for conflict:

> *Three issues come to mind, the one issue is religion, the other is the race factor and the third issue is gender. So I introduce lots of activities that will have both girls and boys in a group, and sometimes they are separate. I work on their strengths and abilities. Then the issue of religion, we mainly have a Christian and Islam story, although it took some time, as the past tradition of Christianity still dictated the terms... we have lots of moral stories. I must say dealing with the race is not such an issue as the little ones just mingle...communication is maybe an issue and this sometimes causes conflict* (Interview, February 2005).

Winnie, a coloured teacher reported that religion is a significant factor that promotes separation amongst learners at her school:

> *Ja, for me it is definitely the issue of religion, it even causes tension in the staffroom. Most of our children come from similar backgrounds as we don't really have many black children but they tend to stick together. I see even the Muslim children tend to all play together, but we have many Muslims. I try my best to mix them in the classroom but I think it is the parents that encourage this as they all live in the same community. I think the system forced us to think in terms of race, and think of us as different because of religion... and you know we are all just human beings* (Interview, February 2005).

With their everyday knowledge, together with the knowledge from informal situations that they had been exposed to, the teachers had some basis for

dealing with diversity in their school. They projected a very positive attitude towards change in South Africa and education. They felt that the training regarding the new curriculum was not very adequate but saw the possibilities the new curriculum presented in terms of dealing with diversity in the classroom. The teachers in a collective voice stated that the sometimes complex jargon used in curriculum policy documents was not easy to comprehend and expressed that they left the training sessions organized by the education department quite confused. Most of the teachers admitted that they did not readily think of planning their lessons with diversity in mind.

The teachers noted that the new curriculum offered space to deal with the issue of diversity with the teachers sharing a range of activities based on the phase or grade they teach. While most engaged their learners in a celebratory, multi-cultural approach, others such as the Foundation Phase educators not surprisingly expressed concern around language issues. To illustrate, a Grade 3 coloured teacher indicated:

> *Literacy is a problem, not only at Foundation level but at all Grades, somehow the children just don't read, while for some learners English is not their mother tongue* (Interview, February 2005).

This teacher dealt with the reading problem by initiating regular reading time, phonic lessons, and utilized flash cards (labelled with English and Xhosa words), paired and shared reading, rhyme songs and dance. She also had a dedicated literacy space in the classroom and encouraged the parents to read with their children as language and communication form the basis of the process of learning and key to the Foundation Phase child's creative expression. In addition, language proficiency facilitates social inclusion and active participation.

Furthermore, planning should ensure that all learners in the classroom are able to engage and be involved in the learning process. A coloured

Foundation Phase teacher reported on how her lessons have incorporated a combination of activities to enhance learning:

> *I read, exercise, dance and sing with the children and I encourage my children to assist those who are having difficulties. I always show compassion towards my learners* (Interview, March 2005).

The teachers who taught in the Intermediate and Senior Phase also highlighted the importance of language as a key variable to acquiring knowledge. In addition, they described how they engaged diversity topics particularly in the learning areas, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation and Social Sciences, where they were able to raise and discuss social issues such as heritage, human rights and the effects of Apartheid.

A white Grade 6 teacher shared his surprise about his learners whose families would in some way have been affected by the Group Areas Act: he was surprised to find how little his learners knew about this significant historical event. However, this ignorance can easily be explained: most parents may simply have found it too painful to talk about the humiliating conflicts of the past, and deliberately suppressed these memories.

> *In my social science class I'm amazed at the lack of knowledge regarding the Group Areas Act, I thought the children, and especially, those who have been affected by apartheid would talk about it at home* (Interview, February 2005).

The interviews indicate that the teachers were able to link diversity issues to lessons in their classrooms. They made connections of how diversity issues could be examined through learning areas such as Social Sciences, Life Orientation, Arts and Culture, languages and the life skills learning programmes. The Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) teachers, in particular, indicated how their exposure to their Barriers to Learning course offered them some additional understanding of diversity.

The teachers in this study disclosed how they manage diversity in each of the three phases of primary school education. At the Foundation Phase (Grades R – 3), the learning programmes literacy and life skills were entry points to dealing with the topic of diversity.

As a means of illustration the teachers spoke about their multi-cultural lessons.

A Grade 3 coloured teacher:

> *We read stories of different cultures, we act out different festivals and sing Xhosa songs* (Interview, February, 2005).

At the Intermediate and Senior Phase level (Grade 4 – 9), the learning areas Life Orientation, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture and Languages provided opportunities to discuss the diverse life experiences of the children. To illustrate a Grade 6 coloured teacher offered that:

> *I use the Universal Rights of the Child as a text for discussion and allow for such expressions through dance and drama* (Interview, February, 2005).

Although it had been recommended by policy that human rights education and education for civic responsibility be infused into the curriculum that pays attention to anti-discriminatory, anti-racist, anti-sexist and special needs issues, it is evident from this study that not enough is being done in this regard, certainly not on an ongoing, regular basis. On the hand, the notion of infusion is not easy for teachers ill-prepared in terms of knowledge of the "other" and skills to deal with deep–rooted and sensitive issues of discrimination and prejudice. What is required is dedicated time and programmes for both teachers and learners so that the issues which emerged in this study such as race, religion, language and poverty are reflected in diversity programmes that lead to dealing with issues informed by a social justice agenda. The teachers expressed that they plan to be more mindful in their planning to involve their learners more actively in

meaningful situations aimed at exposing imbalances and sowing seeds of respect for one another.

To assist teachers with their school and classroom-based programmes, the participants suggested that the following resources be offered to schools.

5.2.6 Resources needed for interventions

In answering the question related to the resources needed for interventions, the resources identified by the participants to assist with the interventions were grouped under the following categories: financial, technical, human and material. The financial resources issues included lack of funding, the inability of learners to pay school fees, poor communities and therefore the school not being able to purchase equipment. This was the situation at most of the schools in this study. Some schools did indicate that they had adequate to sound financial situations.

Again, while some schools had some excellent facilities, the majority of teachers in this study spoke about the dismal situations in which they are expected to teach. They stated that their work was hampered by poor school infrastructure and vandalized buildings with broken windows. Many presented stories of not having enough classrooms, no school hall or resource centres, and a lack of information technology equipment and facilities. Sport fields were also sorely lacking at most of the coloured and black schools.

The teachers felt that an increase in the staff establishment given to schools by the Education Department with improved teacher: learner ratio would lead to smaller class sizes that would result in improved learning and teaching. It would also facilitate the ability to deal with learners having special education needs. In addition, it was stated that human resource development in terms of diversity management, training for governing

body members, senior management teams and teachers should be an ongoing process.

It was further expressed that material resources such as programmes to assist teaching for diversity, additional teaching resources and other material to make sense of the policies are important to the effective implementation of diversity practices in the classroom.

5.2.7 School environment factors

With reference to the question, "What factors in your school impact on the way you deal with these issues?" the teachers spoke about a culture that is required to support diversity programmes at school. Key factors expressed here included support groups for teachers, leadership and management interest, whole school programmes, and parental support. Dealing with diversity also depends on how the school as a whole contributes to the task. A whole school interest requires positive support for diversity programmes, resources and structures with roles and responsibilities in the school to manage diversity. While some of the participants commented that their phase meetings offered a space to structure some ideas around diversity, others reported that dealing with diversity was merely a matter of personal approach.

In relation to the comments on the school environment factors, it is clear that an enabling environment conducive to dealing with diversity is needed. It is crucial that the conditions are such that those teachers responding and contributing to the diversity challenges feel they have the space and the support from the school and system to manage diversity effectively.

5.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

This section of the chapter draws from the focus group discussion and provides a detailed account of some of the key diversity issues mentioned.

The focus group discussion took place after all the interviews were completed. The teachers were to validate the main categories captured through the questionnaire and interview schedules. The participants of the focus group discussion confirmed that the categories represented their experiences, although the contexts sometimes differed. In addition to the validation procedure, the focus group process also served as a pulling together of the data generation process. In addition, the teachers shared their experiences, which provided another opportunity to gather further information. In the small group the five teachers not only addressed the structured interview questions, but branched off into more personal accounts and reflections on the issues raised. Here are some quotes from the discussion which illuminate the responses to the questions.

5.3.1 Teachers' understanding of diversity

The teachers indicated that they understood the concept of diversity to encompass a range of phenomena and categories, namely race, socio-economic issues, culture, religion, language, social matters, learning issues, gender and physiological issues.

> *I think diversity is a very global word. First of all it encompasses quite a lot that we as teachers teach about daily and experience daily like the learner ratio. Although it's been earmarked at 35, I for one know that for the last 30 years that I'm teaching I've never taught less than 40 and am currently still teaching 42. However, it also includes issues of race, language, social background, scared children, worried children and poor and hungry kids.*

This was expressed by a coloured teacher.

With a focus on difference, another teacher at a white school stated:

> *The way I see diversity is the differences that everybody has to deal with in the class – I see it in terms of language, tolerance, financial background,*

*where people live, their intellectual abilities and
physical and emotional well-being. I also have
children that are ADHD and who are on Ritalin you
know...*

An interesting dimension to diversity was tabled by the teacher who
stated:

*I want to say I agree with the issues mentioned but
that there is also diversity among the educators as
we all have strengths and weakness. We also prefer
different teaching styles.*

Another participant, a coloured teacher at a white school, talked rather
explicitly of experiencing diversity in terms of colour.

*Strangely, when I think of diversity I think of colour,
especially given that I had taught for 23 years in the
township and now at a former model C school
[HOA], I see the difference between black and white
and also experience it. Although I did not enter the
school with such a mindset, I now just feel how
people think and see how they refer to other races.
I'm telling you racism, stereotyping and prejudice is
still rife. There is many a coloured school that is
doing much better than we are.*

*Most of the children at our school are not white, I
wonder where the whites are, I think the parents
can't handle the diversity, so they take their children
to schools in another "white" area. So you are
sitting with a "coloured" school in a "white" area.
Even some of our coloured parents do that. They
want white teachers to teach their children, it galls
me, I do take a firm stand, and I let them know
where I come from.*

Referring to a broad understanding of diversity with its array of categories:
race, disabilities, social issues, stereotyping and generalisations, the
teachers stated:

*But you know I don't see diversity in terms of colour
only, I look at children for example mentally
handicapped children and how they are treated by
teachers, teachers are wanting to resist*

> *handicapped children stating they don't know how to*
> *deal with them. You know we need to look at ways*
> *how to deal with handicapped, abused and even the*
> *AIDS issue.*

This was a remark by a coloured teacher at a white school. Another coloured teacher also introduced the issues of perceptions and stereotyping when she commented:

> *Because of who we are we see things in terms of*
> *colour, we see in terms of the blacks that have AIDS*
> *and the whites they are fine. We all need to be*
> *retrained regarding diversity, not just be orientated*
> *as we were with the new curriculum training.*

In this quote she alludes to the notion of disrupting the constructions that have shaped people's thoughts and the need to seek new ways of understanding and dealing with diversity.

Furthermore the white teacher said:

> *You know the children just play together, they are*
> *unaware of racial differences; it's amazing just how*
> *they actually just click.*

This observation shows that at a particular age children do not have fixed lenses through which they view one another, therefore not limiting their encounters.

The teachers offered an all-encompassing response stating that diversity included issues of race, religion, language, poverty, financial problems, health, class, gender, class size, social backgrounds, intellectual abilities, emotional wellbeing, socially deprived children, lack of social skills, environment, learning and teaching styles, learning needs, learning skills, geographical areas, tolerance levels, socio-economic differences, single parenting, same sex parents, physical disabilities, abused children and children from interracial relationships. The complex nature of diversity is

demonstrated in the broad understanding of diversity and the many issues they confront at schools as expressed by the participants.

5.3.2 Issues of diversity in classrooms/schools

Again, the teachers indicated a range of issues which included: racial, economical, multi-cultural and social aspects, as well as different learning styles.

Race was an issue that was mainly understood in terms of white, coloured and black, with white still regarded as the superior race. The coloured teacher at the former white school stated:

> It's interesting to note that also even where I am
> now the coloured children are expected to be little
> white children and because I come from the outside
> and am not white I have come to realise that I am
> different given my varied social experiences.

Aligned with race was also the issue of assimilation, where black and coloured learners felt the need to acquire behavioural patterns that would make them be accepted and not feel inferior, largely constructed by how they are perceived by others. The experience at the former white school revealed that:

> Now my experience is that you need to speak like
> me in order to be understood and accepted, the
> accent issue, this is almost a subtle way of telling
> the children: Your way is not a good way. The
> children of colour are always in trouble because
> they act differently to the expected norm. You know
> it is quite sad, as there is no understanding of
> diversity and cultural differences.

Other responses echoed the many forms of racism still prevalent in schools and society.

> I'm feeling somehow disgusted at the way we are
> talking, we are talking about coloured, white but

where does the black fit into all this. I think that we are sometimes more racist than the white person actually. You know even at my church, the people still use the K word.

This comment was expressed by a coloured teacher. On the other hand a coloured teacher at a former white school reported the following experience:

I've heard that some of our coloured mommies want to send their girls to a white school so that they can meet a white guy; I've heard it from parents. They perceive whites to be better, I mean even I was approached by white and coloured parents who voiced their concern about me a coloured teacher having to teach their children. The black parents did not comment.

A coloured teacher further expressed that:

I listen to my colleagues and sometimes they would say I have so many black children in my class, don't they belong in our classes. We need to give what we want for our children, let's reciprocate; some people need awakening and need to be more tolerant of our black community.

In this context, it should be remembered that the Western Cape has a particular ethnic, social and economic structure within the broader South African context. This relates to the fact that it contains the country's largest concentration of people formerly classified as coloured (Nasson, 1990).

The coloured teacher at the former coloured school further stated:

I mean people talk about them[i.e.black South Africans] as you say about using the K word. When we get together we begin to realise we all have the same wants, same desires same needs – all people want their children educated – but racism is alive and well.

The racial issues were expressed by teachers with particular personal and institutional histories embedded in South Africa's history of racism.

Not surprisingly, the issue of economics also entered the discussion, since the access to a range of resources and learning support is determined by the availability of financial resources. The white teacher commented:

> *But I also just want to add the impact of money and how it impacts on children and your classroom environment. For example, in my school I can refer a child to the Occupational Therapist if they have low muscle tone because the parents can afford it. Money makes a huge difference in the quality of the child's lifestyle.*

A teacher at a former coloured school expressed her feelings:

> *I'm also probably talking finances as well, because poverty has to be eradicated which is going to be a difficult issue. The government speaks of one education system but as you know colleagues, there is no such thing – diversity will play itself out within a couple of years and can it get rid of it all.*

Drawing on the work of Landsberg (2005), one is reminded that poverty in South Africa manifests in adverse factors such as ill health, a deprivation of privileges, backlogs in education, communication deficiencies, limited social status and a negative view of the future. These adverse conditions are created by factors such as inadequate education, low wages, unemployment, malnutrition, violence, vandalism and many other social problems. Poverty and its many manifestations have been highlighted in this study as a matter of great concern, to be tackled as a priority to improve the plight of learners and learning in particularly coloured and black schools.

In relation to multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism, many participants expressed that language accessibility is key to equal opportunities and demonstrated that the language rights as promoted in the constitution of

South Africa have not really been realised. A Grade 2 teacher at a school classified coloured stated:

> *Language is also a major issue, with Xhosa speaking children struggling with English and I, the teacher, unable to communicate in Xhosa. But literacy is a general problem at most of the township schools.*

The Grade 3 teacher at a former white school commented:

> *Now while the policy on multi-lingualism is good, trying to deal with it in the classroom is a problem, I am only conversant in two languages.*

> *You know the children can't read, write and spell and many parents want their children to be in an English class.*

Schools struggle to offer the three languages because of teacher capacity while learners often experience resistance when communicating in their mother tongue. In practice it means that those learners, particularly those who speak Xhosa, find it difficult to gain access to education and knowledge where the dominant language is either English or Afrikaans. It may be argued that this form of language preference may be used as an excuse to keep black learners out of the more privileged schools and residential areas. In this way the inequalities of the past may be perpetuated.

With reference to social issues, the participant in the discussion forum spoke about many forms of unpleasant situations, pain and abuse. The coloured teacher teaching on the Cape Flats stated:

> *I'm sitting with children in my class who have been abused and some who just can't cope at the grade.*

> *Unemployment is rife and many experience daily the ravages of gangsterism, substance abuse, family violence and general neglect.*

In relation to learning styles, the teachers reported that the children have varied learning styles. Many learners are compromised by intellectual abilities and emotional issues requiring special attention, which makes teaching in such a diverse setting a rather challenging task. The participating teachers commended the inclusive education policy, but felt that it was not always practically implementable.

> *I'm sitting with a vast range of different intellectual children, some are slow and others just so bright... I have scared children, worried children and then me being this person placed in charge of them, trying to encompass all of those into one when I teach, that is the difficult part.*

This is the experience of a coloured teacher, while the white teacher commented:

> *Now if there is one thing that I'm concerned about it is the talk of inclusion, we are not trained to handle all the different intellectual and physical disabilities.*

Furthermore she observed that the children at the former white school lacked social and motor skills. This may suggest that, socially and physically, the white children are disadvantaged as a result of "technology". The privileged white children with their material advantages prevent them from interacting with other children and from playing outside games, affecting them physically, emotionally and socially.

> *At my school compared to my township school where I also taught, the children have very poor social and motor skills, due to the technology, computers games, play stations, cell phones, they lack play skills, interaction abilities. The township children play outside and enjoy games. Having technology is sometimes a disadvantage.*

As other evidence collected suggests that white learners have in all respects been privileged, and coloured and black learners comprehensively disadvantaged; here it appears that material privileges may lead to human and social impoverishment. This shows that diversity

as frequently perceived by white parents as a loss of privilege to them and their children is not the case as diverse social interaction is beneficial for human development.

She further stated that:

> *I also need to deal with religion, cultural and interracial issues. I'm also now exposed to the fathers rearing their children and single parents.*
>
> *At another level, it has been quite an adjustment given all the issues in addition to dealing with my white colleagues.*

All these issues which emerged from the focus group discussion illuminated the complex nature of diversity. Whilst the diversity of the class population may be filled with opportunities as the learners have many different experiences, they also have many different needs and are greatly challenged if plans are not in place to accommodate the diverse issues and different learning processes.

The issues of diversity that emerged from the focus group discussion are: poverty, financial constraints, race, religion, language problems, learning abilities and social skills. The environment of schools and the community they serve determine the kind of issues experienced, while technology related issues such as lack of infrastructure, equipment and material have an impact on learning and teaching. Despite some of the socio-economic problems and environmental conditions, there is a willingness by the teachers to do their work. The issues of diversity the teachers have to deal with in the classroom and at schools are multiple and some of the very challenging cases require varied forms of intervention.

5.3.3 Teachers' intervention at classroom level

The teachers were asked: How have you intervened around these issues at school/ in the classroom? In response, several different approaches

were used by the teachers to deal with the issue of diversity. First, they expressed the notion of getting to know the children in order to deal with their varied backgrounds. The coloured teacher said:

> *You know, I just want to say that I'm thankful for being a teacher and to be exposed to the diversity that I find in my class. I make an effort to get to know my children and their circumstances. Sometimes we are not aware of the shack that has burnt down or the other social problems and abuse.*

The coloured teacher at the former white school commented:

> *At my school some of the teachers still want the kids to walk in a line with fingers on their lips and their hands on their head, all that nonsense – that I can't handle. Walking with your hand behind your back is abnormal and the child will not be able to balance... The parents also talk about how happy their children are when they are in my class, sometimes I think the white teachers don't know how to deal with children from a background different to theirs.*

She also stated:

> *I must say it was lovely to teach in the township, because you can walk down the road and you can visit the families, comb the child's hair and things like that without feeling too cautious of what parents would say... My principal told me that he doesn't want me to do house visits, but I told him because of my culture I don't have a problem with home visits – they have accepted me quite gladly. My other colleagues don't do that. I want my parents to know that I'm just as a human being as they are and care for their children.*

Furthermore, the importance of acceptance and belonging was expressed, recognising that children are different from one another. According to Landsberg (2005) recognition of learners' value systems, experiences and cultural norms is to the learners' advantage and it is the school's responsibility to contribute to learners' growth.

> *We must accept all our children and work with them.*
> *I've experienced how some of the children wouldn't*
> *mix with the blacks in their group; this causes some*
> *tension. I use puppets to deal with contentious*
> *issues.*

This form of intervention was offered by a coloured teacher, while the other teacher also teaching at a former coloured school remarked:

> *Also we must show we care and emphasise respect*
> *for one another regardless of race, religion, culture,*
> *learning abilities and backgrounds. They are all*
> *unique and special, and we have multi-cultural*
> *activities.*

The management of diversity again revealed a multicultural approach with the use of social activities and different teaching approaches to accommodate the varied learning styles in the classrooms.

The curriculum content included divergent perspectives and connected with the social context and experiences of all learners. The lessons connected with learners' everyday interests and concerns and drew on a culturally expanded pool of knowledge when dealing with selected topics. The lessons extended the learners' knowledge of the experiences and contributions of "others" in the class.

The intervention strategies the teachers employed varied in terms of the issues that they needed to address although a strong sense of caring and knowing the learners they teach emerged. Their approach was determined by some of their personal experiences.

5.3.4 Teachers' personal experiences of diversity

The teachers were asked: What are some of your personal experiences in terms of diversity? In response, they reflected on the history and consequences of South African politics.

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> *I was moved out of Steurhof and placed in Manenberg, now I'm teaching back in Steurhof and see how things have changed but have come to realise that I don't think we all manage to accept the changes so well.*

The experience of the Group Areas Act by the teacher now teaching at a former white school in Steurhof influenced her opinions while another coloured teacher presented her interaction with whites as a means of elevating her status and understanding in relation to racial stratification.

> *I moved to the northern suburbs about 20 years ago and played my sport with white people. I always felt that I was no different to no one. In the field of sport my children were on par with them. There was nothing wrong with the change I made, it was for the better. My boys had an accent at school but when they returned to their home environment, they spoke like normal coloured boys. My boys were aware of issues and would say, "I don't want your lift unless my black friends are also allowed." They knew what racism was about; I had made choices for them.*

The coloured teacher at the former white school remarked in relation to the notion of choices that:

> *Yes we are able to do that for our children but not all can afford to offer their children such opportunities, and even then our children feel excluded. I think the high school experience messed my son up. He constantly felt picked upon – my son had to shave in the first week, then his hair was cut too short, "my kind het mos nie glade lang hare nie", [my son doesn't have smooth long hair]. I always felt that we had to watch our step and be thankful for being accepted at this former model C school.*

The participants stated that their understanding of diversity was mainly influenced by history, political and personal experiences. Most of the respondents reflected on the history of apartheid, while others recollected personal accounts. It was stated that being in the "new" South Africa demands a paradigm shift that embraces the diversity of the South African

society. In addition, their diverse socio-economic backgrounds and experiences influenced their understanding of diversity. The participants displayed different reference points from which to address issues of diversity.

5.3.5 Resources required for intervention

The question asked: What resources are required for intervention? In response, the participants reported the need for human, physical and financial resources to give efficacy to dealing with diversity.

The following quotes capture the opinions expressed regarding distribution of resources. The coloured teacher commented:

> *Parental involvement is important but as you know not all schools have the support of parents – maybe it will be good to expose the different communities to different schools so that the expertise could be shared.*
>
> *Some schools still just have more resources and money than others.*

The focus group discussion confirmed how important resources are for interventions to be meaningful.

5.3.6 School environment factors

This question was meant to extrapolate what structures and systems schools had in place to support dealing with diversity. While some spoke about how they would sometimes plan as a team at school, others highlighted their referral system, for example requesting social workers or other therapists to intervene where necessary. The data indicated little evidence of any policy or planning on the part of schools to actively deal with diversity. Diversity, it appeared, was something that was mainly an

individual teacher's concern and not integral to the life of the school and hence not part of the schools' development plans.

5.3.7 Are there any other related issues you wish to share?

As a final comment to the discussion a teacher shared:

> *I just want to say that I'm finding this process very interesting; it's just broadening my understanding of diversity, listening to what was presented and to what is currently being talked about; it is rather a complicated issue.*

This was expressed by the coloured teacher.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter reported on the data gathered from the interviews and focus group discussion. It revealed that teachers have a broad understanding of diversity and showed the categories; racial, economical, multi-cultural, environmental, social, learning styles and resources as the diversity issues they confront at schools.

In the next chapter the key issues from the entire data set are further elaborated upon.

CHAPTER SIX
KEY ISSUES EMERGING

6.1 INTRODUCTION

After the data was displayed separately with the various categories and codes as generated from the questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion, it was useful to merge the data to assist with further analysis. At this stage saturation was reached and no new categories were added. The merging of the data was possible as the data sets revealed many similarities. The process that was used to generate the codes and categories from the data is explained in detail in the data analysis process chapter.

In this chapter the discussions on the entire data set are placed under specific focus areas of the study, with some responses combined given the overlaps and links to some of the questions asked as explained previously. The discussion will be placed under the following headings; understandings of diversity, what influenced their understandings of diversity, diversity issues in the classroom, resources, interventions in the classroom, policy issues and school culture.

6.2 CONCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY

In relation to their understanding of diversity, the findings in this study show that teachers had a broad understanding of diversity, showing many similarities in their understanding despite the diverse teaching contexts. The teachers offered an all-encompassing response stating that diversity included issues of race, poverty, financial problems, religion, language, social background, health, class, gender, class size, intellectual abilities, emotional wellbeing, social deprivation, lack of social skills, environment, learning and teaching styles, geographic areas, tolerance levels, socio-economic differences, single parenting, physical disabilities, abused children and children from interracial relationships. These were the

elements of diversity that necessitated the acquisition of skills and strategies to deal with diversity in the classroom. For example, quoting a participant:

> *It is all about differences and similarities we share. It is about race, culture, economics, religion, language issues, social problems and learning problems* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

6.3   WHAT INFLUENCED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSITY?

When looking at what influenced their understanding of diversity, the teachers indicated that role models such as educators, community leaders, political leaders, parents, siblings and religious leaders were instrumental in shaping their opinions. The following quote is an example:

> *I was born after the 1976 uprising and don't have much experience about the struggles people had and had to endure. My knowledge was constructed through what I was told, read and heard about from my siblings involved in the boycotts* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The respondents also mentioned involvement in organisations, political activism, the political climate, and the historical and educational changes in South Africa as influencing factors. Personal experiences involving their upbringing, socio-economic status; discriminatory and stereotypical behavior encountered also influenced their thoughts.

In summary, they claimed that their understanding is influenced mainly by history, political and personal experiences. Most of the respondents reflected on the history of apartheid, while others recollected personal accounts. In addition, broader political and education changes influenced their positions.

6.4   DIVERSITY ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM

In the answer to what the diversity issues are that teachers deal with at school/in the classroom, the following broad categories emerged: racial, economical, multi-cultural, environmental, social, learning styles and resources.

- Racial – the participants spoke about race, the history of apartheid and ethnicity issues which sometime manifest themselves in conflict.

- Economical – factors such as access to finance, affordability and the unemployment of parents were cited as problems.

- Multi-cultural – in this regard the emphasis was on different languages, religions and different cultural traditions and customs.

- Environmental – this includes where children live, their upbringing and school conditions.

- Social – issues related to poverty, gangsterism, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, health and disabilities were highlighted, including aspects linked to single parenting and divorced parents.

- Learning style – the teachers indicated that the intellectual abilities of the learners varied, requiring varied teaching styles that teachers were not always equipped to provide.

- Resources – issues such as lack of equipment, classrooms and furniture were tabled as concerns.

The environment of the schools and the communities they serve, determined how the issues are experienced and managed. These issues as experienced by the respondents are further elaborated upon in the

following section. As one participant put it: dealing with diversity is a challenge.

> *Maybe it is because we lack the knowledge and understanding of each others' religion and culture* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Despite the different teaching contexts, the study pointed to the following main issues which are related to the research question. The main issues that the teachers needed to deal with at school and manage in the classroom were: race, poverty, language, religion, learning styles and resources.

6.4.1 Race

The past apartheid philosophy is reflected in the opinions expressed by the participants. Many teachers cited the issue of race with the educators from the coloured and white schools describing how the children at their schools

> *don't interact easily with black children. There are still many racial groupings* (Focus Group discussion, September 2006).

This may be ascribed to the notion that the issue of racial discrimination may not seem "abnormal" to children whose exposure to change and attitudes are influenced by the behaviour of parents and communities whose values were engineered by discriminatory policies. Currently, discrimination is further punctuated by class and status as experienced by a white teacher.

> *I do notice that the blacks that talk English and are fairly affluent interact easily with children of another race* (Interview, October, 2005).

The comment of a coloured teacher also highlighted racist behaviour by the learners.

> *In the classroom there were those who did not accept the black kids in the class. I had to let them know that we have to join hands and work together and look beyond the issue of colour* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

This is echoed by Nkomo et al (2004) and Soudien, Carriem and Sayed (2004) when looking at issues related to racial integration at schools in South Africa.

There appeared to be much variety in dealing with issues of race and apartheid, religion, traditions and culture as illustrated by a Grade 6 teacher who stated:

> *Certain subjects or learning areas lend themselves more easily to dealing with topics of diversity* (Interview, March 2005).

Another participant, a coloured Grade 4 teacher, offered the following approach:

> *I like to introduce stories, showing different pictures highlighting the racial and political issues in our country* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

The issue of racism, according to a white teacher is

> *often connected to white schools where parents are inclined to label a problem as racial, example, a child who might be experiencing a learning problem. The parents feel we are picking on them because they are black or coloured. Former Model C schools are the only schools where racism can occur as it is seen in the view of the apartheid form – whites versus all the other races* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The alleged racist attitudes are not just confined to former white schools as instances at former coloured schools have also been mentioned.

In terms of cultural adaptation, teachers projected an assimilation stance towards learners from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. One of the white teachers reported:

> *Although we respect their different cultures and beliefs, it is expected that they adjust and respect the ethos of the school* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

It is clear from the various positions offered by the teachers that equal opportunity was perceived as granting access to schools previously denied and expecting the learners (learners who were previously excluded) to adjust to the prevailing ethos of the school. Although the teachers articulated the need to understand the backgrounds of learners and make changes to their teaching practices, it would appear that the structure of the schools supported assimilation rather than an integrationist approach as described by Soudien (2004). White is perceived as the norm and many educators project the position that all learners are the same, "blind" to the unequal relations of power in South Africa under apartheid. This view may fail to perceive the racism inherent in judging and comparing the success or failure of learners from different backgrounds to that of white children. This approach to race is embedded in South Africa's history of racism (Robinson and Zinn, 2007).

Teachers at coloured township schools reported that the residual effect of the past political ideologies is witnessed through the racism that continues to manifest at their schools through intolerance and conflict between different groups.

> *We also have the racial issue at our school and that in itself is a problem because of apartheid. The conflict usually spills over into the playground where the learners make racist remarks. I'm teaching in a coloured township. It has its own problems of the perceptions of the ANC and the Nats and the DA and that comes to the fore. It is evident that those parents have influenced their children not to be*

accommodating of other groups (Interview, March 2005).

Below is an example of how separatism still exists:

> *At my school the black children tend to stick together and the coloured children would form a clique, they feel comfortable in such groups* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

Concern was expressed about a trend that was observed that some children purposefully choose not to interact with other groups, especially coloured children distancing themselves from black children. This contrasts what other teachers have found in their school:

> *In my class I have learners who are coloured, black and white. The coloured learners will go out of their way to share with the white children and will laugh at blacks when they speak their [home] language. That is why the blacks are shy to speak their own language* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

One can make an induction from the above quote that it appears that some coloured learners may have the perception that whites are still seen as superior and the benchmark they need to strive for. While this is disconcerting it is important to acknowledge these perceptions and actions in order to be able to mediate it. Schools that do not have the experience of integration in a sense are robbed of the opportunity of dealing with these issues:

> *We did not have many adjustments as we are still a "coloured" school. We have no learners from any other colour or race in our school* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

On the other hand, the following opposing view was expressed by a white teacher:

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> *The children just click, they are oblivious to*
> *colour and race, but they are mainly the more*
> *confident ones* (Interview, March 2005).

Another white teacher claimed:

> *We don't see race, all are treated the same and*
> *equal* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

This "colour blind spot" attitude assumes equal opportunity for all learners regardless of background circumstances. This study argues that race continues to be part of the discourse of teachers and that race emerged as an issue that confronts teachers in particularly white and coloured schools. In this study, "colour blindness" was the preferred approach when it came to the treatment of learners.

This apparent lack of attention to the diversity of students is a claim that students' differences do not matter (Delpit, 1995). Central to all this is the need for learners and teachers to grapple with bias and prejudice at both personal and systemic levels – aimed at developing an understanding of the disparate effects of apartheid.

A study from the University of the North (Eyber et al, 1997) indicates that for many schools in South Africa, race is not the primary criterion of potential differentiation and inequality. It showed a range of other factors influencing diversity, similarly highlighted in this study. The present study also showed that there is no longer racial homogeneity in most of the South African schools, a view supported by Eyber et al (1997). This has resulted in the former middle class school population in South Africa changing radically to include learners from poor communities and from varying language and racial groups.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) report provided ample evidence of racism within schools (Vally and Dalamba, 1999) and proposed that specific attention be paid to bringing anti-racist teaching

practices to both pre-service and in-service programmes. Soudien (2004) provides a comprehensive overview of the related research and notes that the project of racial integration seems to have become the project of social cohesion in the interests of the dominant class. His work illuminates that the notion of integration is of necessity slippery, and that bringing together young people of different racial identities involves a variety of aspects related to identity rather than merely race alone. According to Hemson (2004) there is a need for research processes that not only utilise race as the frame, since the occasion for exclusion may be language, or inability to pay school fees rather than race itself, as tabled by a coloured teacher:

> *They struggle with English and many can't afford the school fees or buy extra books.* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The legacy of the past and the imbalances it presented has seen blacks and coloureds moving to historically white schools or coloured schools to obtain a better quality education. There is no doubt that those that can afford to send their children to schools where they are more likely to achieve academically do so despite some overtly or covertly racist behavior at particular schools. Although there are also sometimes objectionable cultural assumptions, academic results are a main measure of success, allowing particular schools to get away with discriminatory behavior.

The study shows that the system has again failed the poor as ultimately they are the ones who experience the many forms of disadvantages linked to poverty. Under the apartheid regime, social exclusivity was primarily based on ethnicity; social exclusivity in the post-apartheid era still has a racial bias, but it is primarily shaped by socio-economic factors.

Reports indicate that it is rare that shifts would be from white to historically disadvantaged schools or from coloured schools to black schools. It also indicates that teachers who teach in more diverse schools are in the majority still white or coloured and have not been trained to deal with

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diversity in the classroom. In most cases the changing racial composition of the school emerged as a significant issue:

> *You see we now have to teach children from different racial groups and backgrounds and we don't know how* (Interview, March 2006).

This mirrors the experience of a coloured teacher.

A consequence of this integration is the influx into suburban formerly white and coloured schools of learners from the townships – learners whose mother tongue is not the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the school. The representivity of the teacher population at schools does not reflect the demographics of South Africa, posing a challenge to the teaching fraternity. It is clear that diversity practices in schools have not received much attention and are having a limited impact on the education system. It is dealt with at a superficial level in the classroom with major inequalities still prevalent in schools. For example, poverty, race and language practices are still major challenges to the system. In accordance with other research (Hoadley, 1999; Carrim, 2003; Chisholm, 2008), the findings in this study also show that social and economic inequalities continue to persist. Race has an added significance in South Africa because of the recent history of racism and discrimination. Closely associated with race in South Africa are socio-economic divisions of race, which can prove as intractable, since "people on opposite sides of the socio-economic divide are often incapable of understanding and empathizing with one another" (Barry, 2001).

Race continues to present as a marker of deep division and in South Africa foregrounded in many respects as a key marker of inequality – political, economic and social. Unlike other countries, South Africa is still obsessed with the issue of race as the consequences of its recent racist past persist and continue to imbue the way South Africans of different races perceive one another. Furthermore, in relation to critical pedagogy, schools continue to reproduce these inequalities and exclusionary

practices based on race, class and language, reinforcing unequal educational outcomes.

Since education is key to social change, the study shows that attempts are being made at schools to chip away the apartheid ideology, however more is required to change the climate at schools as racial tension still exists.

> *I had to personally intervene because of the fighting between a black boy and a coloured boy because of name calling* (Interview February, 2005).

> *Also the coloureds think that they are better than the blacks* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

For many years racial segregation divided the population of South Africa with whites occupying the elitist position and blacks placed below the barrier. The ideology of protecting the privileges of some and limiting the opportunities of the majority has resulted in much tension as people clamour for advancement and opportunities previously denied.

Given the emerging black middle class, it is not surprising that black learners in former model C schools may have an economic position that may be closer to those of their white and Indian peers than to poorer blacks. In particular, being black, middle-class and proficient in English, is very different from being a rural working class black with limited command of the English language.

The apartheid education system engineered race, class, and ethnic categories to serve and reinforce the political economy of the racial capitalist system. Present-day racism and the current political and economic patterns of inequality in South African society have to be understood with reference to this history. Racism in education does not constitute an autonomous form of oppression, but rather it is inextricably

linked to power relations and reproduced in conjunction with class, gender and ethnic inequalities. The wider context in which racism is generated is therefore important; even if sound diversity educational policies for the classroom, corridor and playground are developed, this will not be enough to eradicate racism from society.

6.4.2 Poverty

Most of the information regarding poverty was drawn from teachers who teach at schools that were previously labelled coloured and black. The schools were forced to look at various ways to assist children who attend school without food. However, finance was scarce and there was the need to equip the school with improved teaching resources. Teachers claimed that poverty further marginalises learners with learning disabilities and that those from impoverished communities are riddled with health and socio-economic problems. As a result they suffer multiple oppressions.

A coloured teacher expressed:

> *We teach children who come from well-to-do families and they think they are superior to the others who come to school without a uniform and shoes. Poverty is an issue at our schools* (Interview, February, 2005).

Teachers also reported on the issue of social and health problems. The comment from a black teacher in a township school stated:

> *Some children come to school hungry and they can't function, so we need to supply them with sandwiches* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Another teacher at a coloured school remarked:

> *Gangsterism and smoking is a problem and some of our learners stay with their mothers or granny who get no maintenance from their*

> *fathers, so they don't eat properly and therefore*
> *stay sick* (Focus group discussion, September
> 2006).

To supplement the financial support allocated to schools, a black teacher stated that:

> *The school charges school fees to help with*
> *extra resources but the children just can't afford*
> *to pay* (Interview, October 2005).

The comment is supported by a coloured teacher who commented:

> *So we are unable to acquire needed resources*
> *for effective teaching* (Focus group discussion,
> September 2006).

The participants claimed that the government is not doing enough to support processes at schools. While some suggested resources for safety and protection, others thought that not sufficient consideration was given to the training and resources required to implement policies. Resources may include human, financial, material and technical. A view was expressed that the teachers in former Model C (white) schools have many resources but would appreciate support in terms of guidance to improve their capacity. The teachers in the townships grapple with basic issues: a coloured teacher from a sub-economic area expressed rather passionately that:

> *The department should be more accountable;*
> *they can't just expect us to do things. I have*
> *large classes and poor children. My children*
> *need love; they have many learning barriers*
> (Interview, March 2005).

The request for resources is further echoed by another coloured teacher:

> *And we struggle with insufficient resources as*
> *the children can't always pay their schools fees,*
> *so we are unable to purchase teaching*
> *equipment and material, never mind employing a*

teacher to be paid by the School Governing Body
(Focus group discussion, September 2006).

The monitoring and evaluation report of the DoE (2006) reveals that poverty hampers the progress of learners in schools. The report is based on household and labour force surveys and the census conducted between 1995 and 2003 suggests factors such as high unemployment rates, low income and higher dependence on social grants create conditions which hamper the progress of learners in the education system.

Currently, the education department categorises schools according to poverty indicators and provides additional support. It is worth noting that the norms and standards funding of the department is only 6% of the total allocation to schools. This means that very little redress for poverty is provided for in the budget allocation to WCED. This is a cause for concern, given that socio-economic background is the most pervasive determinant of learning outcomes, overlaid with the inequitable allocation of plant and property in the apartheid era (Human Capital Development Strategy, 2004). The notion that education has the potential to set right disparities of wealth, welfare, and opportunity is experiencing a crisis of credibility. Nasson et al (1990) argue that growth conditions coupled to a redistribution of income and wealth are needed to improve the life prospects of poor children.

Within the critical theory framework, education is not a neutral force; it is a product of a particular socio-economic political system (Nasson et al, 1990). Bowles and Gintis (1976) conclude that it is illogical to suppose that the reduction of inequalities in the distribution of schooling might lead to changes in income inequality. They purport that equal opportunity as a concept and as a strategy for educational action has done nothing to remedy effectively the hardships and deprivations of the poor, the black and the exploited (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). This position is illustrated by the comment of a black teacher:

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> *What has changed? We still do not have enough*
> *resources; our children can't afford school fees*
> (Interview March 2005).

It is argued that social equality is not directly connected to justice, for while it identifies an ideal, it does not specify any distribution of rights or resources. This signifies a warning to the education system of South Africa, based on the principles of social justice, equal opportunity and democracy. The theorists caution that it is the failure to confront the structural dimensions of poverty and inequality that has resulted in a preoccupation with tepid policies and programmes that attempt to alleviate the educational disadvantages of pupils from impoverished environments (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). In this regard the following comment by a coloured teacher is worth noting:

> *What has happened is that we had the socio-*
> *economic struggle with our own coloured*
> *children, but now we have children from the poor*
> *black townships with many other*
> *barriers...policies are not working* (Interview,
> February 2005).

This depicts that the daily reality for many learners is incongruous with legislation and policies of the Department of Education. The study further illustrated that it was mainly those children from historically disadvantaged communities that lack socio-economic power, who are still faced with a multitude of barriers to learning. This is in contradiction with the child's right to quality education as stated in the South African Constitution.

It should be argued that a way to achieve economic prosperity and the eradication of poverty is to acknowledge the unequal power relations that exist in South Africa, and look at issues such as job creation and unemployment. Quality education might be a significant step towards promoting social stability and mutual respect among South Africa's citizens, as well as to nurturing each individual's comprehensive growth by harnessing their intellectual capacity. This in turn could assist learners in

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developing the market skills they will need to survive in the so-called free-market economy.

When looking at the achievement of learners in relation to their economic status and socio-cultural situation, teachers should strive to examine and validate the particular knowledge and skills each learner brings to school, regardless of his or her personal background. Only in this way will educators contribute towards improving the life chances of all learners.

6.4.3 Language

In this sample of the study conducted at schools where the language of learning and teaching is English, communication was not considered a "major" issue. The impression gained is that English is considered to be "unifying", regardless of whether it is pedagogically sound. The uncritical view of the nature of language in the process of learning is dictated by the mode of assimilation into schools (Nkomo et al, 2004).

However, other views were also expressed. In these instances language is seen as both a challenge and an opportunity. It is presented as a challenge where the learner is experiencing difficulties in understanding concepts and the teacher cannot converse or even understand the language of the learners. In this situation it becomes a challenge and barrier, especially for Xhosa-speaking learners, to their cognitive development. The contention here is that while there is racial integration, all languages are still to be taught and used as mediums of instruction. Mother tongue instruction remains a challenge for the education system. Where, on the other hand mother tongue instruction is seen as an opportunity in desegregated schools, the assumption is that learners will intermingle and learn each other's languages, with the result that their emerging multilingualism becomes the tool for sharing experiences, ideas and knowledge.

In the most optimistic scenario, this learning experience would be truly mutual, and therefore "democratising" and anti-hierarchical: The Xhosa-speaking learners would not be trapped in the role of the perpetual "poor cousins", or the linguistically deficient "aliens" where language skills must be laboriously be developed in order to approach the superior level of the (mother-tongue) English speakers. On the contrary, the Xhosa-speakers would at times feature as masters and experts of their mother tongue, entrusted with the task of correcting and instructing their English-speaking classmates. This could do wonders for establishing a "balance of knowledge and skills" between the learners and help to improve the self-image and confidence of Xhosa-speaking learners. This could only happen if Xhosa (and other indigenous languages) were genuinely recognized as assets, not only pro forma but also in terms of the learners' evaluation.

Teachers indicated that the barrier of learning is presented by English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) where this is not the learner's home language. This is often the case for African learners in previously white, coloured and Indian schools, and is a matter of concern. A coloured teacher expressed:

> *I am not comfortable in Xhosa and not able to communicate effectively with the Xhosa learners and that is a problem as they are not able to understand and I don't feel good about it* (Interview, February 2005).

They stated that "struggling" learners are supported through peer-teaching and remedial forms of intervention. This may include basic sound formulation and word identification through to occupational therapy.

Some indicated that attempts are made, albeit superficial, to learn some form of Xhosa at schools to facilitate communication. The lack of communication has in some cases led to conflict between learners, evident during intervals at schools where groups are formed on the basis of race and language.

The complexity of the language issue cannot simply be reduced to the notion of communication but should be seen as playing an important role with regard to the life of a human being as a member of a community. Language therefore does not operate in a vacuum, but in the context of the culture of a community, which in the case of this study is the school.

The issue of indigenous African languages being offered in the school curriculum also emerged. It is suggested that the offering of African languages is important, seeing that schools continue to attract learners from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. However, the study also noted the desire to offer "Xhosa as an extra subject" but to keep English or Afrikaans as a subject and the language of instruction. This approach continues to exclude and alienate, contradicting the importance of "mother tongue" instruction and posing a challenge regarding the training of Xhosa-speaking black teachers and their employment at former white and coloured schools.

The Language in Education Policy (2002) supports an additive or incremental approach to multilingualism and states that the learners' home language should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. In the Foundation Phase, where learners learn to read and write, there are attempts by teachers to create the space for the learners to acquire knowledge through their home language. This is, however, not always possible if the teacher's home language is not Xhosa. This excludes Xhosa-speaking learners from the suggested language-of-teaching policy. According to a participant, a white teacher:

> *My experience is that the child becomes free if able to speak in their own language rather than when they speak English. They feel safer when they are able to express themselves in Xhosa, because if they must speak in English they may have the answers but can't express it* (Interview, February 2005).

This position is supported by PRAESA (1999), who argues for mother-tongue tuition, especially at primary school level.

Language is critical in nation building and should support national goals, bring about national reconciliation, carry democratic legitimation and provide cultural and linguistic pluralism. In a multilingual country like South Africa it is important that learners reach high levels of proficiency in at least two languages and that they are able to communicate in other languages (DoE, 2002). This idea is supported by the Values in Education Initiative of the Department of Education (2002), which proposes that each province should offer at least three official languages in schools and that English-and Afrikaans-speakers, specifically, should learn an African language.

The NCS (2004) envisages that learners be equipped with the linguistic skills and aesthetic and cultural awareness to function effectively and sensitively in a multilingual and multicultural society. The languages follow an additive approach to multilingualism. It assumes that all learners will learn their home language and at least one additional official language. Learners should become competent in their additional language while their home language is maintained and developed.

Language policy and practice, at national, school and classroom level, is a critical factor in learning. At present there is little congruence between the national consensus on language policy, what parents want for their children and the use of language in the classroom. Indeed, controversial as they have been in the past, never have these issues been in greater state of flux than at present. Furthermore, rapidly changing demographics play havoc in all spheres (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999). In particular, schools teach learners who speak Xhosa as a home language. These learners face enormous obstacles in their classroom interaction while the teachers face the challenge of multilingualism, which they are not trained for. To quote a coloured teacher:

I can only talk two languages, so the children
who speak Xhosa don't always understand what
I'm saying (Interview, March 2006).

An indication was that schools have considered a range of intervention programmes to overcome the language barriers.

The study of language needs to be inclusive of linguistic diversity in the school, local community and society at large. The importance of language to individuals in terms of how it expresses their social and cultural identity needs to be taught alongside its importance as a highly symbolic means of communication. Furthermore, teachers are to be skilled in terms of understanding how a second language is acquired and how to instruct learners who do not understand the language of instruction, for example English.

From a critical theory perspective, language and communication should provide opportunities for pupils to explore the effect of particular words and phrases on people in relation to the power of language. It needs to provide learners with the insight to realise that a single word can have different meanings for different people. Ultimate empowerment occurs when pupils feel they have control of language rather than language being used as an instrument to control them. For some learners who are the recipients of racist language, this means empowering them with the language to challenge oppressive use of language (Gardner, 2001).

Many participants expressed that language accessibility is key to equal opportunities and also in a way demonstrated that the language rights as promoted in the constitution of South Africa, have not really been realised. Schools struggle to offer the three languages because of teacher capacity, while learners often experience resistance when communicating in their mother tongue. In practice this means that those learners, in particular those who speak Xhosa find it difficult to gain access to education and knowledge where the dominant language is either English or Afrikaans. It may be argued that this form of language preference may be used as an

excuse to keep certain racial groups out of certain schools and areas where the quality of life for some is more equal and better than for others.

6.4.4 Religion

Religion appeared as an issue at the Indian, white and coloured schools and was addressed through the celebratory approach. This approach involves learners presenting what it is that they do on certain religious festivals. Teachers stated that through this approach, learners are at the very least being sensitised to the traditions and beliefs of others. The caution is that this approach may lead to exclusion rather than inclusion, where the link between social class and religious practices determines the status and acceptance of a religion. This is especially the case where Christianity is premised on majoritarian power models, rather than on the power of value systems (Mail and Guardian, 2006).

According to a white participant,

> *Religion is interesting as the school calls itself a Christian school, yet at least one third of the school is Muslim and I just find the Muslim kids are much more aware of their religion. They go to Mosque on a Friday, they do a fast every year, whereas a lot of the kids who call themselves Christian don't necessarily go to church or do things like that. It's interesting, although if you look at the numbers at the school I suppose more kids would be classified as Christian* (Interview, March 2005).

Many approaches were attempted and suggested; a participant stated that every morning she observes a minute of silence to accommodate the diverse religions in her class because, as presented by a coloured teacher:

> *One thing that you can't do is neglect the child's spirituality* (Interview, February 2005).

Another participant, a coloured teacher, commented that their school had attempted to separate the children for religious observation sessions but experienced logistical problems.

> *I will say that the religious part did not really work for us in terms of having the children separated into Islamic studies in the mornings and Christian sessions with their class teachers or priest. This presented logistical problems at times when the presenters were unable to make the sessions. So now we are just busy with moral issues, moral stories that accommodate all faiths, religions and denominations* (Interview, March 2005).

Christianity in South Africa today has to learn to live and work in an environment in which it is not the official religion. Part of this lesson means having to live without state privileges, which included the status that Christian holidays enjoyed as official public holidays and the integral place of Christian teaching, prayer and ceremony in the school day. While there are attempts to accommodate other religions in schools, the domineering force of Christianity still permeates the schooling system in the sample of the study. South Africa's expanding classroom requires critical reflection on the role of religion in a constitutional democracy (Chidester, 2008) that underpins current education policy.

The current education policy, NCS (2000), has adopted a multi-tradition, multi-faith approach to religion, in line with the values of the constitution. Such an approach is inclusive and suggests that schools should offer religious education as opposed to the religious instruction of the past. This distinction has to do with informing learners about and encouraging respect for all major world religions rather than promoting the beliefs of one particular faith. Through religious education, learners are exposed to the world of religious diversity, while at the same time they are encouraged to think about the new national unity in South Africa (NCS, 2004).

Religions embody important values such as justice, mercy, love, compassion and co-operation. These values are important to encourage the development of morality in the home, at school and, more broadly, in society. Adopting a multi-traditional approach to the study of religion is one way of enabling learners to critically examine the moral codes embedded in all religions.

6.4.5 Learning styles

Learning is an individual experience, and each learner and teacher has his/her own learning style and needs. This is a challenge for teachers, who cannot rely on a one-size-fits-all curriculum, but are required to make provision for all learners in their care. Teachers who know and care about their learners ensure academic development and also pay attention to the affective and emotional well-being of the learners in their care (Tomlinson, 1999). The teachers in this study showed much support for learners with special needs.

> *There are learners with minor handicaps, for example being deaf in one ear. Because of my approach, the rest of the class is so compassionate towards the boy. They will help him in every way he needs to be helped. They even help those who are a bit slow due to one or other barrier. When we work in groups the stronger ones will help the slower ones* (Questionnaire, August, 2004).

Teachers in diverse classroom settings modify their instruction so that each learner develops the understanding and skill for the next phase of learning. According to Tomlinson (1999) the teachers in such classroom settings accept, embrace, and plan for the fact that learners also bring differences that make them individuals. The challenge is to allow for this reality and make classrooms a good fit for each individual. She suggests that teachers use their time flexibly and use a range of teaching strategies and styles to accommodate the various learning styles of their learners. As it is noted, all learners have different learning profiles which may be

shaped by intelligence preferences, gender, culture, or learning styles. While some students need to talk ideas over, others work better alone and prefer writing.

On the other hand there are learners who have varied learning challenges which range from struggling with reading and phonics to conditions that require high levels of intervention. These learners generally display an uneven development pattern, showing good progress in some areas and poor progress in others. This varies in the different areas such as listening, reasoning, phonics, writing, oral expression, comprehension, and mathematical reasoning.

In this study the teachers highlighted the following issues that impact on learning. The experience of a white teacher was that:

> *Some of the children are emotionally and socially immature and rather sensitive* (Interview, February 2005),

while a coloured teacher stated that:

> *They are easily distracted, while some are again easily frustrated and disturb the rest of the learners* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

On the other hand, another coloured teacher echoed:

> *I have those learners who are good at arts and crafts and at sport, while some again have motor development problems* (Focus group discussion, September, 2006).

The comment by a white teacher was:

> *While some are able to process things and deal with concepts, others remain at a concrete level and develop at a slow pace* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

While some of the learning needs may be overcome with the help of specialised support, other needs may be beyond the capacity of the teacher. Some learners fail to develop appropriate skills in phonics or struggle to solve word problems in mathematics. This may be due to visual or hearing impairment, mental disability, emotional disturbances, socio-economic, systemic or pedagogic differences (WCED, 2005). In addition, some learners also experience learning needs characterised by attention deficit disorder and physical disabilities.

According to Ladson-Billings (2001) while teachers must be aware of certain learning conditions to be able to support learners, labelling and stigmatising are to be discouraged. The learners who feel they do not measure up to expectations often develop a poor sense of self, which may result in poor social skills. As Ladson-Billings (2001) rightly points out, teachers encounter a whole range of diversity when they enter the classroom: not only racial differences, but a variety of social issues. In the case of the present study these include hunger, worm infestation, HIV/AIDS and violence. All of these issues impact on the learning processes at schools.

Teachers participating in this study reported that the Department of Education expected them to cope with mentally, emotionally and physically challenged learners, though none of these educators had been trained to do so. Not surprisingly, they often found that even their best efforts were in vain. Despite allowing and providing for a range of learning styles and supporting their learners in every way, amongst others by giving them multiple opportunities to achieve the desired outcomes, many still could not make the grade. As one black teacher put it:

> *We lack the skills to cope with some of the issues and learning problems we are confronted with daily. It is a struggle as we don't seem to win* (Interview, March 2005).

The current policy, White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education states that all learners are to be supported in the education processes and expected to achieve. The policy promotes recognising that all learners have the right to intervention, curriculum adjustments and to be accommodated in order to succeed. The experience of teachers as expressed by three coloured teachers show:

> *While the policy is well meaning, we don't have the resources and experience to deal with the various issues* (Focus group discussion, September, 2006).

> *If we don't have the resources and time the child is unable to achieve the outcomes* (Interview, January 2005).

> *We have large classes, and we can't communicate in the child's mother tongue and it is not nice if the child feels discriminated against* (Interview, February 2005).

The availability of sufficient educational resources and access to adequate infra-structure play a role in effective learning in any society. Another systemic factor which may impact on learning is the language of learning and teaching which is often the learner's second and sometimes even third language. To quote a coloured teacher:

> *Some parents are unable to read or write the language of teaching and learning, they are unable to assist their children with homework and projects* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

Other factors are lack of basic and appropriate learning support materials, lack of learning supportive devices, inadequate facilities at schools, overcrowded classrooms and lack of mother tongue educators.

To address the various learning needs of the learners, Tomlinson (1999) suggests that the teachers use materials flexibly and employ flexible pacing. Another coloured teacher stated:

> *I work with the entire class but sometimes things work better in groups. I also work one on one but with large numbers things tend to slip (Interview, January 2005),*

while a white teacher with adequate resources remarked:

> *I make sure I have different worksheets for the different ability groups and also sometimes use different teaching activities to accommodate the varied learning needs of my learners (Interview, March 2005).*

In a diverse classroom the teacher therefore draws on a wide range of instructional strategies and teaching modalities to accommodate the varied learning profiles of the learners. Tomlinson (1999) states that the aim is to use different teaching styles and link learners with essential understandings and skills at appropriate levels of challenges and interests.

Tomlinson (1999) argues that teachers generally are well aware that human beings share the same basic needs for nourishment, shelter, safety, belonging, achievement, contribution and fulfillment. She states that by attending to human differences the teacher can assist individual learners to address their common needs since experiences, culture, gender, genetic codes and neurological make-up affect the varied learning needs.

6.4.6 Resources

With reference to the resources, the participants reported challenges when implementing diversity practice in classrooms. Some examples cited were the poor quality or total absence of resources such as infrastructure, materials and financial support. Systemic issues such as large classes, lack of resources, social problems and economic concerns further impact on implementation. However, in order to assist with the interventions, the

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participants recommended the availability of materials, technical, financial and human resources to improve classroom conditions. A black teacher commented:

> *Because my classroom is so small and with many children, I therefore most of the time teach learners outside where there is sufficient space* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

In addition, they also suggested support in terms of diversity management training, not only for teachers but also for management and governance. They claimed that the programmes would assist with improved relations, understanding of the other and the implementation of ongoing diversity programmes at school. The use of parents and community persons as resourceful beings was also recommended. As a coloured teacher put it:

> *You know our parents don't always have money to support the school but we do use them in other ways if they are willing* (Interview, February 2005).

It is clear that parents who have financial resources have access to better-resourced schools. The disadvantaged communities, mainly blacks and coloureds, are reliant on state funding for rudimentary provisions offered to "no fee schools". Having resources clearly assists quality education.

The fee issue further polarizes people and hinders the poor from enjoying sound educational facilities such as sports fields, school halls and resourced classrooms. Despite political changes, limited financial resources remain an issue at black and coloured schools, a challenge to the notion of "quality education for all" as promoted by the state.

Soudien (2004) argues that understanding the experiences of both the middle class school teacher and the issues of the teacher working in an economically deprived context is critical to addressing the many inequalities in a democracy. The experiences offer the contexts to understand issues and a basis for developing strategies to improve

conditions. The study pointed out that it is in particular the middle class schools that have the advantage of hosting a rich diversity and presenting incredible opportunities for learners. On the other hand, teachers at economically deprived schools highlighted the many socio-economic challenges. The point is made that middle class schools have the opportunity of hosting rich diversity compared to deprived schools where they tend not to have much diversity but struggle with basic deprivation.

The distribution of resources is marked by the economic inequality, which in itself is a historical product of racial dispossession. Economic inequality is likely to continue to be a major diversity issue faced by schools in South Africa, as the majority of people in South Africa have for years been subjected to the most humiliating forms of oppression and exploitation. They have been deliberately marginalised and disempowered as a group, and setting things right requires a redress strategy that cannot advantage the beneficiaries of the racialised history. The redress initiative must be constructed in a form that promotes a social justice agenda and be founded on the construction of an equitable rights position.

6.5   INTERVENTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

When answering the question, "How do you deal with issues of diversity in your classroom?" the following trends which were summarised, capture the responses of the teachers.

- Multiculturalism – this showed a celebratory approach to different rituals, traditions, customs, festivals and religious days of observance. These programmes were meant to inculcate an understanding of and respect for different cultures and religions, aimed at debunking stereotypes. Included here was the issue of language with varied attempts to accommodate all languages, not without many challenges.

- Social Activities – these include sport and recreational activities that encourage participation for enjoyment and the expression of talent. The learners are able to interact and communicate, the "ball" transcends all social and racial barriers, and the game is only guided by the rules of the game. Learners with special and unique talents are also nurtured through extra-curricular activities. Through a range of extra-curricular activities, the learners are able to demonstrate leadership skills and deal with social problems facing society in their own terms. Life skills, conflict resolution and healthy lifestyles were also promoted.

- Learning Styles – the multi-modality approach was considered a way to deal with different abilities of the learners. A constraint expressed was the lack of both human and physical resources to facilitate the process of learning. The teachers expressed the need to accommodate learners who have barriers to learning and to pace learning and teaching accordingly. Experiencing language as an issue, the challenge centred on the ability to communicate effectively so that the teacher could make a difference in the life of every learner. Not being able to converse in an African language posed challenges for certain teachers in the classroom.

- Individual Support – While the teachers reported feeling overwhelmed (given their workload), they expressed the importance of being sensitive to learners' needs through recognising individual circumstances, background and potential.

An important aspect reported by the teachers was knowing the children whom they teach. Different methodologies were suggested, with the celebratory approach being a main form of intervention. Collaborative planning, with group work and individual teaching, was emphasised. It was recorded that planning should accommodate all in the class, to ensure that they achieve their full potential. Many of the participants indicated that they plan in accordance with departmental prescripts and

their planning is not always cognisant of diversity. They also reported that the training they received from the department regarding planning and diversity was inadequate and "sometimes rather confusing". As expressed by a coloured teacher:

> *I'm not sure whether the advisors understood the curriculum. Look, the new curriculum was new for everyone* (Interview, February 2005).

They stated that an approach that is collaborative and collegial would assist with planning for the wide range of diversity issues encountered in the classroom. "Working and sharing with others will be most helpful."

The participants reported sensitivity to religious, cultural expectations and to the language discourse when planning. They were also cognisant of the school systems and structures. The involvement of parents and management in dealing with diversity was also recorded, with an interdisciplinary approach involving different learning programmes and learning areas offered as ways of addressing diversity.

An opinion was expressed that dealing with diversity is a process, and teachers who are sensitive to all these diverse issues may initially feel overwhelmed at having to do something about all of the issues. This opinion was supported by a coloured teacher:

> *You know with OBE there is so much to do, with all the new policies it sometimes just gets too much for us as teachers* (Interview, February 2005).

To teach diverse learners demands planning, time and commitment. It involves recording what works as a way of determining the efficacy of the varied approaches. By noting the knowledge of the learners, their varied interests, experiences and beliefs, the teachers indicated that they were able to tailor their teaching to meet the diverse learning styles and backgrounds of the learners.

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The teaching approaches were similar for different topics and aspects. The topics included festivals, heritage, food, games and environment. Many teachers suggested a celebratory approach to dealing with the issue of culture, limited to the notion of heroes, religious holidays, foods and festivals. To quote a white Grade 4 teacher:

> *We acknowledge difference by including a theme called "Let's Celebrate". Children are encouraged to come and tell how they celebrate any festival be it birth, weddings, birthdays and religious days* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

The "concert" approach suggested by the participants, although an entry into dealing with diversity, fails to see that culture is comprised of a myriad of sub-systems, rules of conduct, interaction, ideologies, local traditions and worldviews that shape knowledge (Kroeber and Parsons, 1958). These authors argue that if culture is restricted to symbolic factors and artefacts produced, it will continue to be seen as traditional dress, dancing, food, and other manifestations or artefacts of explicit culture. Deep culture manifests in a variety of ways: from interaction patterns between people to concepts of time and space, from religious protocol to familial obligations and processes of formal and informal education.

Many teachers used the notion of show and tell, games, song, surveys and role-play to instill knowledge of diversity and respect for others. The position was tabled that through storytelling, song and play, space is offered for learners to express their history, pain, hopes, fear, anxiety, anger and aspirations. These stories, whether relayed through song or dance, weave people together. Teachers felt that while being part of a caring culture in the classroom environment they provide learners with a sense of belonging. To illustrate:

> *I always try to be compassionate. I would encourage the children to care and respect one another and we hug one another* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

A study of the past can expose and overcome the psychological, educational and economic oppression experienced during the apartheid era. Some teachers also suggested that literature and history focusing on colonialism and apartheid may be used as lenses to engage the learners in meaningful study of South African history and culture. In addition, the view was expressed that the teaching programmes promote citizenship, show respect for the other and embrace diversity.

Specific to language, through co-operative learning, group work, peer learning and the use of outside resources, children were encouraged to develop their home language and listen to stories that could help them to forge bonds with their cultural groups so that they build confidence and develop a sense of belonging. Through encouraging their home language development, the teachers indicated that the learners were able to understand concepts better and flourish in both a language-rich and cultural-rich environment.

There are numerous parallels between the diversity issues facing teachers from different former education departments. They all need to tackle issues related to language skills, religion and culture, racial integration, ethnicity and socio-economic status, and overcome the legacy of apartheid. Learning about how to deal with issues related to ethnic diversity in different settings, given the legacy of racial segregation, has been seen as a most valuable exercise. Many conceded that their exposure to different cultures and races has previously been sparse. There is no doubt, given the various reports on the social manifestation of diversity, that schools are often places where misunderstanding and tension arise. This signals the need for teachers to be prepared and equipped to handle the racial, ethnic, class and religious mix in the classroom. The teachers stated that, with appropriate intervention lesson plans, learners can develop and strengthen cognitive skills that will assist with the holistic development of the child.

According to Rogers and Renard (1999), students are motivated when they believe teachers treat them like human beings and care about them personally and educationally. In discussion with the teachers, they demonstrated the importance of caring for learners, showing understanding and supporting growth and learning. The teachers indicated that by applying their knowledge of human needs in the classroom, they make their learners feel respected and nurtured. An environment is created where the teacher offers meaningful choices, creates the space for interesting learning opportunities and fosters relationships where the teacher is seen as a caring person.

One coloured teacher drew on a common construct of the teacher as the caregiver when she expanded on her role:

> *I don't just teach; I visit homes and let the parents know that I as a parent also understand things. You see the children we teach need love and care* (Interview, February 2005).

This approach is encapsulated as a "caring pedagogy" with teachers in this study expressing the importance of understanding the background of their learners and offering the learners the space to express their opinions and feelings. Many teachers highlighted a pastoral relationship with their learners, expressed in different ways. The experiences of these teachers, followed by a sense of self-reflection may be the first step of the teachers on their journey toward dealing with diversity. Through a process of exploration it seems that the teachers are able to consider how and why they do what they do in the classroom.

> *somehow this discussion has opened my eyes to new ideas needed for change in the classroom* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

6.6 POLICY ISSUES

The respondents claimed that the new curriculum is framed within a kaleidoscope of other school policies; although the respondents felt that

policies offer guidelines, the translation of the philosophical into practice was the challenge. Participants suggested that policy is not always understood by both school management and teachers which results in varied interpretation and implementation. In addition, they claimed that the many changes to the curriculum have caused confusion which has not been adequately mediated by departmental officials. A coloured teacher stated that:

> *I don't think they, the advisors knew what they were talking about. There was so much theory – no practical demonstrations were offered at these sessions. We all had different understandings of how to plan just to be told over and over we were not on the right track you can imagine how we felt* (Interview, March 2005).

Furthermore a comment was offered:

> *I have no problem with the policy changes in the system but we were just forced to accept a process we had no input into. We did not really participate in the process of change* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

6.7   SCHOOL CULTURE

In relation to school environmental factors, some of the respondents stated that they have structures in place. Many reported that a whole-school approach to diversity would be most useful. Despite some of the socio-economic problems and social conditions, respondents indicated that there is a willingness to perform, but they require strategic leadership from management as well as diversity programmes to enhance development and confidence. Participants recognised the need for training in diversity management. According to a participant:

> *The school climate should be open to diversity so that all children and parents feel respected and welcomed* (Interview, January 2006).

6.8   CONCLUSION

From all the data gathered from the questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion, there emerged a relationship between the historical and geographical location of schools, diversity issues experienced at the schools and how they were managed by the teachers. The different diversity issues the teachers had to deal with at schools were influenced by the location and school context. The differences in the learning programmes were usually a function of how individual teachers themselves formulated their lesson plans. The teachers expressed that the learners they teach and the grade informed what they choose to teach in relation to diversity and also influenced how they chose to deal with topics related to diversity.

A description of the history of education in South Africa and where the schools are located in terms of past racial classifications were cited earlier in this dissertation. Furthermore, an illustration of the demographics is also presented in Chapter Three. Most teachers in this study taught at former HOR schools situated in residential areas designated exclusively for coloured people and located in a province marked by the "preferential coloured labour policy" within the broader apartheid framework.

The former classification of the schools and the communities they serve have a direct impact on the kinds of diversity issues they confront. Indications are that teachers at black schools are predominantly black, serving learners from lower-income communities experiencing a dearth of resources. On the other hand, teachers at well-resourced schools, such as former white schools, predominantly serve learners from middle-class families situated in more aesthetically pleasing environments.

Taken together, the historical and geographical factors determine the kind of diversity issues the teachers deal with as well as their approach to managing diversity in the classroom.

6.8.1 Diversity issues across former departments

The teachers in this study categorised a range of elements that comprised diversity. The elements they named were: race, poverty, language, religion, social factors, learning styles and resources. These were the elements that required particular strategies to deal with diversity. It is worth noting that the site of teaching determined the type of issue teachers confronted.

The following table is a display of the main diversity issues identified in relation to the former education departments.

Table 6.1: Main diversity issues as per former department

Dept	Race	Poverty	Language	Religion	Social	Learning styles	Resources
HOR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
HOD	X	X	X	X	X	X	
HOA	X		X	X		X	
DET		X	X		X	X	X

X Denotes the issue experienced at the former departments

The table shows that language and learning styles appeared as the most mentioned markers of diversity at all the former departments. Race and religion were not regarded as issues at the former DET (black) schools because of their rather "homogenous" school population. It is not surprising that poverty emerged as a factor at HOR (coloured) and DET (black) schools with reference to social problems and lack of resources, conditions that confront poverty-stricken communities created by past apartheid legislation.

The element language appears to be an issue at all the former departments, while reference to different religion groups also arose as an indicator of difference particularly at the HOA (white) and HOR (coloured)

schools. The issue of religion is a distinguishing factor generally linked to specific race groups.

Emerging is that a relationship exists between the context of teaching and the kind of diversity issues which schools face and that an intervention strategy for dealing with diversity cannot be based on a one-size-fits-all model.

6.8.2 Diversity management in the classroom

The fact that most of the participants were Foundation Phase teachers obviously shaped their thoughts and classroom interventions relating to diversity. For example, within the Life Skills programme – a mandatory programme for learners from Grade 1 to 3 – the teachers introduced the topics such as different faiths, festivals and issues around basic social and personal rights. These were mainly presented through the show and tell approach where learners are exposed to different traditions, dress codes and stories of various cultures. The Intermediate and Senior Phase teachers introduced social issues through the Social Science, Life Orientation and Arts and Culture learning areas. The teachers explained that topics such as apartheid, personal and social development and heritage are examples of how the topics serve as an entry into dealing with diversity.

In this study, the teachers reported that they were not hesitant to deal with diversity topics in their classrooms. For example, in the area of Life Skills, Life Orientation and Social Sciences they illustrated how these learning areas and subjects offered the opportunity to elicit understanding from others, supporting Delpit's (1995) position of the value that resides in being open to learning from others with whom no understanding and sharing previously existed. In addition to the content, teachers found the learning areas to be a great help in broaching diversity related topics. The teachers also found the policies which promote diversity to assist with

sensitively charged issues, and used methods such as storytelling, discussions and festival celebrations to communicate the issues.

The strategies employed show willingness by teachers to deal with diversity, but the interventions are basic, influenced primarily by personal experiences.

Language remains a challenge although the use of multiple languages in the classroom is regarded as a useful resource. In this sample it emerged that despite the language policy in education, English still dominates as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). English is considered as the "neutral" language. An interesting contradiction exists: although the teachers were aware of the policies and the limitation of learners not learning in their mother tongue, they felt obliged to teach through the medium of English. The justification provided is that English offers greater opportunities and possibilities of integration.

The profiles of the teachers show that some of them also have to function in their second language, as the LOLT is not their home language. As this study shows, many learners are also not learning in their mother tongue. Another gap is the mismatch between teachers and learners. While they are both working in their second language, many do not share the same home language. For example, Afrikaans home language teachers are teaching Xhosa-speaking learners in English.

The demise of apartheid school policy has led to the migration of learners from areas poorly resourced under that policy to schools in the more generously endowed residential areas. Although the boundaries are somewhat blurred in the case of coloureds and whites, both of whom claim English and Afrikaans as mother tongues, there was a general convergence of language groups and racial classification under apartheid, which in turn related directly to economic privilege or deprivation. The convergence of mother tongue, racial classification and socio-economic fate was most consistent in the case of black Africans – in the Western

Cape mostly Xhosa speakers – the overwhelming majority of whom experienced dire poverty and deprivation. The legacy of this linguistic, racial and economic stratification is still very much alive today, and will remain with us for some to come. Thus while the quest for an English-language education may partly explain the massive influx of township learners into (English and Afrikaans – medium) suburban schools, many parents may simply be striving to give their children the high-quality education associated with better-resourced schools. It is noted that economic status still determine access to better-resourced schools, which tends to deepen the class divisions, not only between the race groups, but increasingly also within each of the race groups.

The teachers in the study demonstrated a broad understanding of diversity, and presented a willingness to accommodate all learners in their classrooms, as expressed by a Foundation teacher:

> *We must accommodate all learners regardless of their backgrounds, race, language, religion and culture* (Interview, February 2005).

Some teachers spoke about how the learners of different language and racial groups chose not to interact with one another, passing remarks and echoing insults at those considered different to themselves. This shows that by putting children together does not necessarily promote integration and that perhaps more effort is required to break separatism and foster deeper integration.

Throughout the study, the constant refrain from schools was that they do not have the resources to employ staff who can teach an African language that administration workload prevents them from assisting learners with language support, and that schools do not receive enough support from the provincial education department.

This study has shown that educators are not equipped and confident to handle the principle of additive bilingualism that underpins the policy of

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multilingualism. The policy accepts that it is essential to be fluent in one's first language in order to learn a second language effectively. The result of neglecting the home language of the learner is to deny the learner the opportunity to develop his or her cognitive abilities in their home language or in a second language (Landsberg, 2005). Apart from the linguistic and cognitive issues, many schools continue to use language as an exclusionary device despite the progressive language policies.

This chapter reported on the issues that emerged for the entire data set. The next chapter pulls together the discussion on teachers' understanding and management of diversity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY

7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the strands of description and analysis around the nature of diversity as experienced by the teachers in this study are drawn together.

Firstly, the teachers' understanding and management of diversity with its many problems and challenges is illustrated, followed by a framework for teaching diversity. Secondly, a discussion on classroom strategies and approaches is presented.

The two main research questions were critical since any diversity framework and programme are informed by a particular conception or understanding of what diversity is all about.

The diagram in Figure 7.1 portrays the interconnectedness of the participants' understanding of diversity, the factors that framed their understanding, the issues at their school and how they deal with it within the classroom. In addition, the conceptual diagram also highlights the link between some of the problems and challenges that the teachers thought would impact on the implementation of the strategies to deal with diversity in the classroom. The links are characteristic of the teachers' experiences and show that diversity needs to be understood as a concept operating within a broader context and influenced by factors such as the learners and their backgrounds, the nature of the school, socio-economic context and resources, experiences of the teachers and instructional practices.

Figure 7.1: Dealing with diversity – a conceptual framework

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Informs understanding       │        │ Diversity issues            │
│                             │        │   • Racial                  │
│   • Role models             │        │   • Economical              │
│   • Political exposure      │        │   • Multi-cultural          │
│   • Personal experience     │        │   • Environmental           │
│                             │        │   • Social                  │
│                             │        │   • Learning styles         │
│                             │        │   • Resources               │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
                  ↖                      ↗
                     ↘                ↗
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ Conceptualisation of diversity│
              │   • Social Justice           │
              │   • Multi-culturalism        │
              │   • Learning styles          │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
                            ↕
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ Diversity management strategies│
              │   • Personal                 │
              │   • Classroom                │
              │   • Institutional            │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
                            ↕
```

┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ **Problems**   │   │ **Implementation**│   │ **Challenges**   │
│ Lack of infrastructure │   └──────────────────┘   │ Racial, language, religion │
│ Limited resources   │   ↙   ↘   │ and culture issues   │
│ Large classes   │   │ Stereotypes and perceptions │
│ Financial issues   │   │ Critical understanding of   │
│ Inadequate training of │   │ diversity   │
│ teachers   │   │ Socio-economic issues   │
│ Respecting the others   │   │ Social and health   │
│ Conflict issues   │   │ environment   │
│ Administration overload │   │ Classroom management   │
│ Different policies   │   │ Diversity methodology   │
└─────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────────┘

The conceptual framework that emerged from this study illustrates that diversity is best described within the broad categories of social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles. Social justice was interpreted to include issues related to politics, economics and social issues while multiculturalism included religion, culture and language. Learning styles included the ways learners learn, catering for their different learning styles and how teachers teach.

The three categories social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles identified in this study, with their overlapping features reveal how diversity was understood by the participants and how it informed the strategies they employed. The categories offered a frame for a wider exploration of the research questions.

7.2   SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice according to Pendlebury and Enslin (2004) is largely about distributive justice. Broadly, it includes issues related to poverty, race, social environment, health, status and class and includes a claim for a more just redistribution of resources and wealth (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). These aspects were highlighted as areas in this study that required redressing for education to have any meaning for those still hamstrung by past unjust laws of apartheid. From an educational perspective, social justice includes the redistribution of and having access to educational goods. However, the participants in this study claimed that social justice is critical to the life chances of the learners trapped by socio-economic issues, the social and health environment and gender. They continually referred to the imbalances created by the past apartheid system and contrasted their schooling to the current education philosophy aimed at embracing diversity. This view is echoed by authors (Miller, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000; Young, 2000) who support the creation of conditions for

living a fully human life. Teachers articulated that not much has been done to improve the plight of the poor, the underprivileged and historically disadvantaged communities, even though a new educational system has been ushered in since 1994 (Soudien, Carrim and Sayed, 2004).

The teachers spoke about the redistribution of "goods", a term coined by Fraser and Honneth (2003) which the participants considered important for their own intervention strategies. However, focusing narrowly on the distribution of goods may lead to the meaning of those goods being lost. A preoccupation with simple equality may obscure the real issues at stake in the pursuit of social justice (Pendlebury and Enslin, 2004). What is required, is for sufficient resources to be made available to eradicate hardships and poverty.

Politically, social justice is concerned about the right to equality and freedom from discrimination as protected by the constitution – no person shall be discriminated against because of his/her race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, conscience, culture or language (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Furthermore, the social goals and the critical outcomes of the new curriculum in South Africa are informed by the constitution. This position is supported by Fraser and Honneth (2003) who also argue for the politics of ethnicity, race, minorities and gender. If differences of race, ethnicity, gender, culture and class in the classroom are addressed in a discriminatory way, this is the result of uneven power relations outside the classroom, and such discriminatory practices in turn reaffirm and perpetuate such uneven power relations, both in the classroom and in society. Factors such as race, ethnicity and gender are used as markers of power and subordination or of privilege and disadvantagement by society. The concept of social justice underpinning this present study

requires that this relationship between power and discrimination is both recognized and counteracted.

In this study, social justice included recognising the power relations caused by the discriminatory nature of race, ethnicity, culture, class and gender in the classroom. The point is made that through the creation of an all-embracing learning environment where diversity is acknowledged and all learners included and respected, classrooms could become a space for the development of a culture of social justice. This view is supported by many authors (Booth el al, 2003; Pendlebury and Enslin, 2004; and Engelbrecht, Green and Naicker, 2005).

It was expressed by a coloured teacher that:

> *Diversity is the inclusion of all people, cultures and religions, abilities into one society where everyone is equal and has equal rights and opportunities* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

Furthermore, as offered by a black teacher, it is proposed that a culture should be created where:

> *No one is more superior than the other, regardless of race* (Interview, February 2005).

The statement highlights the entrenched sense of superiority and inferiority complexes inculcated by the apartheid ideology. In this regard Giroux (1988), McLaren (1989) and Goduka (1999) argue for the provision of ways for teachers to understand the contribution which schools offer with regard to the perceptions of race, class and gender division. In addition, the emphasis on "oneness" and "sameness" as evident in some responses also in effect denies the cultural and linguistic capital of the spectrum of diverse learners. The background is, therefore, not being

acknowledged and begs the question: The "same" from which cultural perspective?

The question remains: "Do schools offer the space for discriminatory practices to be challenged and addressed?" Cushner et al (1992) argue that the culture of the school impacts on racial, cultural and gender issues, while Eyber et al (1997) states that unless the issues are actively addressed by the whole school, the patterns, hurts and inequalities will continue to be perpetrated.

In dealing with some of the diverse issues, Delpit (1995) poses the questions: "Why do we have such a hard time making school a happy place for poor children and children of colour?" Her approach is one which promotes knowing other people's children and says that education should not continue to label them in deficit terms, but nurture them for success. Similarly, many teachers in this study expressed the importance of getting to know the children whom they teach; this is supported in the literature (Cushner et al, 1992; Zeichner, 1993; Banks, 1995; Grant and Sleeter, 1997; Goduka, 1999). The teachers commented that understanding the children's living conditions results in applying appropriate intervention strategies. As stated by a coloured teacher:

> *When you call the parents, you then only pick up what the child is going through, when I heard that their shack had burnt down and they actually had nothing, I realised how advantaged I am; we need to know their needs* (Interview, March 2005).

The children enter the classroom from different backgrounds and with many issues: To quote a coloured teacher:

> *I have a child who was abused, a child who cannot cope with the work, poor children, whose*

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mothers have died of HIV/AIDS; and [those from]
different race groups; so I must make them feel
at home (Focus group discussion, September
2006).

A feeling was expressed by a coloured teacher at a former white school
that it is most important to be able to identify with the child:

The children come to me because maybe I'm
coloured and they seem to understand me better
(Focus group discussion, September 2006).

On the other hand, as illustrated by a coloured teacher at a township
school:

Home visits are important because I want the
parents to know I'm a human being just like
them, a mother who also needs to deal with
problems and who would like to offer support
where I can because I care (Interview, February
2005).

The point is reinforced that understanding the child's background informs
and facilitates classroom management and lesson planning. Within a safe
classroom environment, learners have the opportunities to learn new
lessons while unlearning the lessons of dehumanization. In the classroom,
showing compassion for both the learners' academic progress and life
circumstances engenders a caring environment that will nurture them for
success.

Across the system, social justice in terms of educational access,
participation and outcomes are far from being achieved. To quote a black
teacher:

Due to finances and poverty that must be
eradicated which is quite a difficult thing that the
government must deal with, and they speak of

> *one education system but as you know, there is*
> *no such thing as one educational system, the*
> *poor schools still don't have much* (Interview,
> October 2005).

This position is supported by Soudien, Carrim and Sayed (2004) who argue that learners will continue to feel excluded if discriminatory practices are not adequately addressed.

An interesting observation has been the migration of white and coloured learners to other schools as discussed by a teacher at a former white school.

> *Where maybe there are more white children, so*
> *the white and the affluent coloured parents take*
> *their children to other schools which they feel is*
> *better as we are now getting black children from*
> *the surrounding areas* (Focus group discussion,
> September 2006).

Evident in this perception is that white education still offers better quality education with social and class mobility determined through a white framework.

> *I was approached by poor white parents and a*
> *coloured mother who was not happy with me*
> *being their child's teacher, as I am coloured*
> (Interview, October 2005).

This was the experience of a coloured teacher now employed at a former white school.

Although there is one national curriculum for all schools, the pedagogical knowledge and experiences of teachers of colour are not readily accepted at previously white schools,

Though you know there are many coloured schools and teachers that are far better (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

These forms of inequality, Nieto (2002) maintains, are based on stratification due to race, social class, ethnicity and other differences which needs to be resisted and challenged (Giroux, 1988).

The term social justice, as used in this study was understood by the participants to include aspects such as having a culture of equality, fairness, democracy, equity, showing respect for the other and a culture of human rights in classroom practice. It refers to showing responsibility to care for others for the common good of society and serves to emphasise that the needs of all learners and schools should be met, and the constraints that hinder equitable opportunities for improved living conditions should be challenged. Social justice is characterised by factors such as poverty, class, finance issues and socio-economic background. The social issues included gender, social problems (drugs, violence, gangsterism) and health-related issues. Discriminatory factors, based on race and abilities, and the quest for equal opportunity, embracing diversity and respecting the other were also located within this category.

According to Gardner (2001) it is the uneven distribution of power, not cultural characteristics which cause the powerful to discriminate in favour of themselves and which should continually be investigated.

7.3   MULTI-CULTURALISM

The term multiculturalism, as it is being used in this study, includes aspects such as culture, different traditions, customs, religion and language.

The category taps into the rich diversity of the learners and communities to create an inclusive environment. The environment is influenced by the social, political and economic backgrounds of learners and communities. Schools are encouraged to create practices that ensure the full participation of all learners irrespective of their cultures, race, language, economic background, social environment and ability. To deal with the legacy of cultural intolerance, learners need to experience, understand and affirm the diversity of South African cultures.

Although the teachers in this study spoke comfortably about multiculturalism, the term - according to Robinson and Zinn (2007) - provides a less comfortable conceptual home in South Africa than in the United States. They purport that in South Africa, the policy of apartheid rationalised oppression and exploitation of certain groups of people under the guise of a celebration of different cultures. Many educationalists approach the term with a great deal of caution (Moore, 1994); this is a complex area of policy, given the history of apartheid in South Africa. Some of the educationalists do, however, regard multiculturalism as a way in which people view themselves in order to initiate a process of finding a new understanding of who they are and what they can become (Moore, 1994).

In this study a coloured teacher in a way captured the participants' understanding of multiculturalism.

> *Diversity is across all aspects, it is about multiculturalism, religion, culture, creed, race, gender, ability. It is acknowledging that we are different and need to be accepted for who we are* (Questionnaire, August 2004),

while another coloured teacher commented,

Well, I would say about diversity and around diversity, I would actually mention the different religions, cultures and traditions of people; it is about multiculturalism (Interview, March 2005).

From the varied perspectives this study's organisation of multiculturalism is linked to the ideal of opportunities (Banks, 1995; Grant and Sleeter, 1997), and cultural pluralism (Cordeira et al, 1994; Grant and Sleeter, 1997), but cognisant of the various interpretations associated with the concept in South Africa. While multicultural education was seen to be the antithesis of apartheid education, it was also perceived by many to be too conceptually close to it for comfort (Moore, 1994). The argument tabled was that cultural difference should be respected and used to construct a new cultural base. This may be linked to an aspect of cultural pluralism that is not separatism, recognising and respecting different religions, languages, customs, traditions, and cultural beliefs. The concept cultural pluralism asserts that the presence of diversity should be valued, respected and encouraged.

However, it is interesting to note that diversity is not always respected and recognised; and that the process of assimilation is rife at some schools where

the coloured and black children are expected to be little white children (Interview, January 2006).

A white teacher expressed the view that

when you come from the outside you actually begin to realise that you [are] different. I found that many of our coloured and black children find themselves constantly in trouble because of their particular social skills, so maybe being a bit loud is seen as bad behaviour (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

This resonates with Soudien, Carriem and Sayed's (2004) debate on inclusion and exclusion. It was reported that there is a sense that the dominant culture is projected in subtle forms, as experienced at former white schools,

> *with the white accent being a form of acceptance and a subtle way of telling the children that your way is not good enough* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

Given the "lack of understanding of the other", the idea of interaction across the racial boundaries might facilitate better understanding and respect for one another. This process, as reported, may create the space where deep-rooted prejudice and discriminatory practices could be challenged and remedied. After all, as a black teacher put it:

> *We may be different but we all have the same wants, same needs and same desires* (Questionnaire, August 2004).

This statement is in a way supported by Gardner (2001), who states that individuals have multiple affiliations, "we may be different but we also have similarities". These statements further reinforce the need to develop programmes to prepare teachers to have critical perspectives on the relationship between schooling and societal inequalities. In addition, a moral commitment to correcting these inequities through their daily classroom and school activities is required (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1987; Liston and Zeichner, 1991; Goduka, 1999).

Although not always explicitly stated by the participants, it is important to understand that the issues of culture, language, race and class are related to issues of structural inequalities embedded in education in South Africa and best described within a paradigm of critical multiculturalism by Hemson (2004). Having a critical approach to multiculturalism and

multicultural education is supported by Grant and Sleeter (1997) and Sleeter and McLaren (1995). Murtadha (1995), drawing on the works of McLaren, cautions that multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can just be another form of accommodation of the larger social order.

7.4   LEARNING STYLES

In relation to Learning Styles, drawing on the work of Grant and Sleeter (1997), common sense and education literature tell us that learners have different learning styles. All learners are unique and may prefer to learn in ways that differ from the teaching preferences of teachers. As the teachers in this study said about the strategies they adopt in the classroom:

> *We try to emphasise the "specialness" and uniqueness of each of our learners as many have very poor self-esteem. We try to focus on them on their strengths, the fact that they have such different needs (intellectual, emotional, physical) may take the focus off for example the differences in culture, language, and religion* (Questionnaire, 2004).

This was the comment of a white teacher, while another stated that:

> *Where I can, I try different ways of teaching styles. Hopefully this helps the child to learn better and I do peer teaching and remove difficult learners from the classroom set-up by seeking help for those learners who need it* (Interview, October 2005).

A coloured teacher remarked on the importance of planning and stated that:

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It is important to plan so that all learner styles are accommodated (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

The study suggests that teachers should pay attention to the diverse cognitive and learning styles of the children in their class, an approach supported in the literature by Dunn and Dunn (1993), Gardner (1999), Delpit (1995) and Goduka (1999). Differences of learning style may be aggravated by other diversity factors, but they also exist in highly homogenous societies. After all, the individuals within a language group and within a social class differ from one another.

Learning style is a complex concept (Gardner, 1999) and involves how people perceive, process, store and retrieve information (Grant and Sleeter, 1997). In a learning situation, it involves finding out how individuals attend to cues. How does an individual connect cues? What strategy does the individual use to make sense of new information or ideas? To quote a coloured teacher:

You see, some learn through association, while others prefer tactile stuff (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

Gardner (1999) and Grant and Sleeter (1997) contend that people develop a way of approaching information and processing tasks, and not everyone develops the same ways. Furthermore, they argue that learning styles are influenced by the child's environment, upbringing and background. This concurs with the comment of a coloured teacher:

I arrange my classroom according to the needs of the learners and group the learners' accordingly. I create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning to accommodate the diversity. I have the experience to deal with learner problems and help them where they

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experience problems (Questionnaire, August 2004).

While understanding the child's background is supported, many caution against generalisation and stereotyping, for example, as expressed by a coloured teacher:

> *Although children come from poor backgrounds,*
> *it does not mean they are not capable of learning*
> (Interview, February 2005).

There were many generalisations and stereotypes about the different groups with much reference to the blacks who have a particular culture and also the notion that all is equal in the new South Africa and, therefore, all children should be treated the same. This approach limits new ways of thinking and doing.

In this study, the teachers acknowledged that learners have different learning abilities and styles. The teachers have incorporated aspects of co-operative teaching, but are faced with the dilemma of the lack of resources, large classes, poor infrastructure and buildings and with learning issues. Large classes can limit how well teachers get to know learners individually, which works against the ideal that teachers get to know and understand the "baggage" learners bring into their classroom from their respective social environments. These concerns and challenges are supported by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) and Christie (1999). The teachers, however, offered a variety of teaching strategies which included group work, games, role-play, direct instruction, independent work, research, discovery learning, class discussion, projects, peer tutoring and co-operative learning. These varied strategies are supported by Gardner (1999), who argues that teachers who vary their teaching methods have greater success teaching their learners.

According to Gardner (1999) there are at least nine different kinds of intelligences, and everyone has a profile of strengths and weaknesses. This includes linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily kinaesthetic, naturalist and existentialist intelligence. Although not specifically commenting on Gardner's framework, the participants volunteered the importance of different teaching modalities and tabled, to quote a Grade 1 coloured teacher:

> *We do movement forms, music and singing, storytelling, cutting and pasting, puppet work* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

Gardner (1999) purports that learners who are not strong in verbal skills may be strong in other intelligence areas and often do not do as well in the classroom as they might have, had the classroom supported other intelligence areas as well. Teachers who vary their teaching strategies can capitalise on additional areas of intelligence and, in the process, have greater success teaching their learners. The teachers in the study shared a range of methodologies that can be used in the classroom. In addition, they suggested the application of differentiated teaching. To illustrate this approach the comment of a Grade 2 coloured teacher is presented:

> *If I teach them something I try to do it in different ways, they must be able to see the word in their reading, in the phonics, in a puzzle and in different contexts* (Interview, February, 2005).

While the successful implementation of varied strategies demands proper planning, the idea of individual planning is also an important consideration as expressed by a black teacher:

> *And many teachers don't even know that each child has a different barrier so you've got to work*

out activities accordingly (Interview, March 2005).

The Grade 2, white teacher commented that:

> *I actually have to consider factors like ADD, low muscle tone, hyperactivity, the passive aggressive type, so that I set them all up for success* (Focus group discussion, September 2006).

The planning process, therefore, includes planning for all learning styles, offering challenges, new ideas, abilities of the learners and other problems encountered by the learners. The lesson, as illustrated by the Grade 3 coloured teacher includes:

> *We sing a song in between, tell a joke, tell a riddle, do some jumps, teaching the tactile child and accommodating the kinaesthetic child* (Interview, October 2005).

There was consensus that planning should include group work but this should not be over-emphasised, as individual learning is important and good preparation for future phases of education.

Collaboration, teamwork and sharing of ideas are planning approaches suggested by teachers. To quote a coloured teacher:

> *We don't know everything as teachers, so through collaboration we are able to pick up something that has gone wrong in the lesson and confer with one another, we tend to teach according to our preferred way of learning* (Interview, March 2005).

The planning process, according to a coloured teacher, should include

> *ensuring progression of knowledge and skills with the necessary resources to stimulate*

*learning, looking at needs of society, diversity
issues and accommodate the different abilities of
the learners* (Focus group discussion,
September 2006).

This process is supported by Fyfe (1993), Robinson et al (1999) and Gardner (2001).

Learning Style was linked to the understanding that all learners enter school with their own experiences, interests, strengths, learning styles and barriers to learning that need to be accommodated. These included physical, mental abilities, social skills, emotional skills requiring differentiated teaching approaches and forms of co-operative learning.

It is, therefore, important that the teacher is aware of the constraints created by the different barriers to learning which stem from various factors. These factors are systemic and may include lack of learning support material, inadequate facilities at school and large classrooms. Another factor is societal: poverty, unemployment, violence, abuse, health issues and HIV/AIDS. The other challenging factor is the physically and intellectually challenged learner.

Furthermore, the teachers highlighted concerns regarding technical issues such as infrastructural concerns of classrooms, books, class size, and other resources that support learning and teaching. The study showed that these issues influenced what they are able to do in the classroom.

7.5   PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The data shows that the implementation of diversity practices presents some problems and challenging opportunities. The data shows that the constraints of the context within which teachers work represent challenging opportunities for dealing with diversity. A number of problems

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and challenges in relation to diversity were identified by the teachers. The teachers identified the lack of infrastructure, limited resources, inadequate training and support. Some of the challenges included issues concerning racial problems, language, socio-economic inequalities and diversity-teaching methodologies.

In terms of the participants management of diversity, the study pointed out the conditions and the contexts that constrain them. In this study the conditions of the former education departments revealed different contexts for practice. For example, the black teachers in particular spoke about the socio-economic conditions and the lack of physical and technical infrastructure that impact on their teaching processes. These phenomena highlight the intersection between political and education processes, where aspects unless dealt with at the political level will continue to constrain what can happen in the classroom. Furthermore, a matter of concern is that communities based and located in townships created for blacks remain trapped in conditions not always favourable and conducive to learning. The situation therefore arises that learners migrate to other school communities, which are better resourced.

The coloured teachers noted some similar concerns but also introduced the heterogeneous classroom in terms of race, language and religion. Worth noting for this discussion is that some of the teachers within this category (HOR - coloured) taught at schools that are situated in areas that are fairly resourced and were slightly favoured in terms of past apartheid child-per-capita-spending legislation. The teachers at former white schools who are generally well-resourced because of privileges provided to them under apartheid, face the challenge of dealing with "different groupings of society", but in most cases there was an expectation that "they" (that is, the children from other racial, cultural and religious communities) fit into the dominant culture of the better-resourced schools to which they have

migrated. This approach was also evident in the responses from coloured teachers at schools to which Xhosa-speaking learners had recently migrated. This entrenched apartheid ideology of "us" and "them", "ours" and theirs" continues to inform the discourse of the teachers shaped by apartheid education, and it continues to filter through the education system.

To get a proper understanding of the teaching process itself, one needs to appreciate the problems and challenges encroaching from all sides on the classroom situation. According to Clark and Peterson (1986), external influences such as curriculum policy, the community and internal constraints such as the physical setting and resource availability significantly affect teachers' actions. In addition, teachers' thought processes may be similarly constrained because of reduced flexibility in their planning arising from curriculum design decisions determined by education policy. The challenge for teacher development is to develop innovative teacher education programmes that empower and enable teachers to offer a diversity curriculum in spite of the constraints of the contexts in which they work.

It would seem that the teachers are not receiving sufficient training and support with diversity and are left to tackle the issues on their own. Teachers are taught essential teaching skills during their training but receive limited, if any training in how to work in a diverse classroom. Most respondents indicated that school management and departmental officials did not offer adequate, if any support to teachers. This highlights the need to provide training and support to teachers working at schools where diversity issues arise, so that the teachers feel equipped to deal with such situations. Teacher development sessions in the form of workshops and training programmes organised by the school, education department and

other institutions in diversity could improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of teachers facing many diversity challenges.

The study pointed out that resources (material, financial and technical) could contribute significantly towards a conducive learning environment to deal with diversity in the classroom.

7.6 DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

This section discusses the ways in which teachers have elected or omitted to adopt certain strategies in dealing with diversity. The strategies are probed in the light of the many changes that educators have to deal with in education at a personal, classroom and institutional level (Banks, 1995; Cushner, 1992; Grant and Sleeter, 1997; Zeichner, 1991; Goduka, 1999).

7.6.1 Personal

According to Banks (1995) and Cushner et al (1992) it is necessary that teachers have relevant conceptual frameworks about diversity. The study sought to look at pedagogical strategies making connections between teachers' conceptions of diversity, their classroom practice and social expectations. This is attained, according to Banks (1995) when a diversity consciousness is developed which involves making linkages between the past and present, understanding how the problem under consideration originated and developed. The experiences of past injustices provide insight into the nature of the present problem. In particular, such an understanding is built on the teachers' perspective within a historical context, which has been demonstrated in this study. So, while the apartheid past influenced their perceptions of diversity, understood in terms of social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles, it was generally managed in multi-cultural terms.

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Christie et al (2004) remind us that understanding the historical context of education in South Africa is important for education reform and ongoing professional development. The historical peculiarities that have shaped the present status of education in South Africa should not be ignored. Christie et al (2004) further purport that the traditional values and historical experiences of teachers are compelling factors that determine the extent to which teachers may assume or attempt roles as mediators and reflective practitioners. This was evident in this study as the historical political past, social values and traditional belief systems informed teachers' understanding and management of diversity.

While the teachers in this study may have concurred with the importance of teaching for diversity and its related values, they do not seem to give the area the kind of attention that is expected. It would appear that other classroom and school factors demand the time and attention required for developing a deeper understanding of the diversity issues. Their own classroom practical concerns (class size, behavioural problems, academic results, back to basics, lack of resources) impede on the promotion of equity, respect for others and social justice goals as determined by the NCS.

Despite the broader political changes, teachers are still a key factor in challenging social orders that are unfair and unjust, and in promoting an education that delivers on the principles of the South African constitution. The teacher is to unmask the deceptions of differences, to debunk its racist myths and relate the notion of justice for all (Habib and Bentley, 2008). In a sense, that decision and the choice that each teacher has to make, is both personal and individual. If the individual teacher is to challenge imbalances, teachers jointly and collectively are then promoting the notion of social justice – building a South African nation that does not

discriminate on the basis of race, creed, class or tribe, but committed to embracing diversity.

In order to challenge and work towards social justice, teachers are to give attention to the education of politics and the politics of education (Chisholm, 1993). Even though a new political dispensation exists in South Africa, teachers still have a political responsibility to ensure that schools are used to debunk myths and stereotyping dominant in society.

7.6.2 Classroom

Drawing on the work of Goduka (1999), Grant and Sleeter (1997), Cushner et al (1992) and Zeichner et al (1991) it can be stated that the critical role of the teacher is to handle the increasing diversity in classroom settings. In this study two approaches were espoused at the classroom level. The first approach was based on a multicultural conceptualization of how to work with diversity. The second approach can be located within the participating teachers desire to be supportive, understanding and sensitive to the diverse needs of learners. This has been termed a "caring approach".

7.6.2.1 Multi-culturalism

The study shows that the position presented by the teachers is to recognise and celebrate 'cultural' diversity. It would seem that given the past racist history of South Africa, the teachers in this study were rather comfortable with the term culture.

In the study, culture was seen as having to do with food, dress codes, weddings and customs, caricaturing the various backgrounds of people. For example, to cite a teacher:

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> *The Xhosa learners will perform Xhosa*
> *traditional dances, while the Indians will dress up*
> *in their Indian clothes and bring some Indian*
> *food. The Muslims will recite some verses form*
> *the Koran and the Christian learners enjoy*
> *singing hymns* (Interview, February 2005).

This uncritical form of multicultural education does not acknowledge that there could be differences within perceived 'racial' or 'cultural' groups, and that the identity and culture of individuals are not static but ever changing (Soudien, 1999). There is no homogenous culture, for example, Indians, who are constituted of Muslims, Hindus and Christians, are still portrayed as if they are culturally all the same.

Although not as forcefully expressed, the teachers did see the notion of culture as a way of expressing the heritage of all as a contribution to make to the new South Africa.

It is clear that the main frame for managing diversity in the classroom is multicultural education offered through the celebration of festivals, recognition of different foods and dress codes. They spoke enthusiastically about caring and knowing their learners, emphasising in their learners a respect for the other and celebrating differences through, for example, festivals, cultural days, sport days and other social activities. Dolby (2000) reminds us that before difference there was sameness or similarity, implying that we are human before race, cultural and religious differences, and we are human before socio-economic status defines us.

In an unproblematic way, cultural differences were seen as natural and aligned to different racial groups, used to mask racial segregation and justify a whole range of injustices.

However, the problem with the concept is the failure to recognize that culture is a matter of dominance and that not all cultures have equal power and status. In a multicultural setting, one culture invariably dominates while the other cultures are eventually disregarded and relegated to a lesser form of importance and value.

The conception of multiculturalism aimed to teach 'tolerance' and harmony, devoid of issues of race and class, fails to deal with the imbalances and to problematise the notion of equal opportunities in post-apartheid South Africa. In South Africa, apartheid discredited certain cultures and race groups and used culture as a tool to force people to be grouped together, leading to people often being ashamed of their status as blacks. Although South Africa has a constitution that recognizes all as equals, the transition from apartheid to a post apartheid era has not led to any major changes in attitudes towards race and culture.

Researchers such as May (2000), Soudien (1999) and Cross (1992) argue that where the concept of culture is seen as devoid of any political significance, it tends to underplay divisions, conflict and exploitation. By stressing harmony, such a perception of culture ignores or even denies struggle and power relations in society. The teachers' response reflected such an unreflected "no problem" notion of culture, for example in the way they referred to "our culture" (i.e. white/coloured) and "their culture" (blacks), without questioning or problematising these concepts. These responses merely reflect the divisions of South African society, without challenging them.

Culture cannot be seen as separable from politics or as neutral. Culture is an interplay between force and consent in asserting the hegemony of the dominant class (Cross, 1992). So seeking an all-embracing culture requires an awareness of the contradictions in the South African society

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and of the inequality in diversity caused by race, class, ethnicity, geography and other factors. An all-embracing culture, according to Barry (2001) depends on citizens having certain attitudes towards one another and regarding everyone's interests as counting "equally" towards a common good. Diversity, which promotes the notion of mutual respect and recognition, does not expunge differences.

This notion of mutual respect and recognition can occur through dialogue and debate between citizens of different "cultures" and between those who share aspects of race, class, ethnicity, language and religion. An argument is made by Barry (2001) for the importance of dialogue among and between diverse people which is required for civic nationality.

Furthermore, the point is made that no one group has the monopoly on the truth about culture, but rather that it is a constantly moving picture in which any number of diverse people play a part. Crude multiculturalism assumes cultural homogeneity and calls for the coexistence of distinct cultural blocks; it also advantages cultural elites within society (Cross, 1992; Barry, 2001).

What can schools do to help bring about a fairer world, or can't they do anything? Do issues of poverty, discrimination, and oppression require a more vigorous solution than just promoting cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect? What does it mean to be a citizen in a large democratic society, one that still has major unresolved issues involving fairness and social justice? Are we dealing with inequalities if certain groups continue to oppress and control others? This set of questions – as raised by Grant and Sleeter (1997) - helped to further argue that while the teachers understood diversity in what would be termed social justice, they mainly dealt with the issues through the notion of multiculturalism.

The celebratory approach to managing diversity in the classroom as suggested by the participants in this study lacks a critical examination of multiculturalism. The multiculturalism framework, if not critically examined may still adhere to rather stereotypical fixations. Critically understood, no monolithic culture exists and no culture exists that is superior to any other.

Dealing with diversity in terms of multi-culturalism remains at the level of surface curriculum if the focus remains fixated on external factors such as clothing, artifacts and traditions. To develop a deeper understanding demands asking questions about what, why and how things were done. This will lead to much more fundamental change. Though this will take longer to achieve, it will also have a more profound impact on diversity.

A review of the approaches suggests that multi-culturalism is the hallmark for diversity practice in the classroom of the teachers in this study. While multi-culturalism may arguably teach us to respect each other and develop social skills, an unreflective emphasis on multi-culturalism has resulted in it being a method of organizing the learning environment and becoming the learning activity. This calls into question the ways in which learning about diversity takes place.

It appears that the terminology such as multi-culturalism as favoured in the USA and UK, is also used in SA as it comfortably accommodates "cultural differences". The concern though is that the notion of multi-culturalism does not explicitly require from teachers to work towards transformation, but only to react to past discriminatory practices. This stance is limited, as it does not require of teachers to delve more deeply into the truly problematic aspects of diversity such as poverty, deprivation, racism and power relations in society. In relation to the theory underpinning this study, both internationally and locally teachers have generally not used the philosophy of critical pedagogy to ask how

historical experiences have influenced culture and power relations. To unpack multi-culturalism requires a rigorous and critical understanding of culture. It may be that teachers avoid the issue as they may not be comfortable in dealing with power relations at a deeper level, and therefore prefer to draw on their natural caring abilities to manage their classrooms.

7.6.2.2 Caring approach

Another approach introduced by the teachers was the need to care for the learners. A caring approach was defined as an environment that illustrates sensitivity to the diverse needs of learners. This approach was precipitated by the multifaceted understanding of diversity which pointed to an approach for classroom practice that embraces diversity and shows respect and care for others.

In relation to the social needs, some of the teachers indicated that pedagogic tasks cannot be separated from the pastoral tasks of teachers – although not all, some of the teachers indicated the importance of home visits, dealing with conflict and addressing hunger. This move to dealing with social issues starts to take on the approach which Grant and Sleeter (1997) term social reconstructionist. Embedded in this approach is the preparation of citizens to work actively on problems facing society and examining social inequalities. According to Grant and Sleeter (1997) understanding the learners' social background and upbringing is an important element in making the connection between the home, curriculum and the classroom.

A caring teacher can make a big difference in the educational outcome of children entrusted to their care for many hours a week. An understanding of learners' socio-economic circumstances and their impact on learning

enables teachers – as key agents of change in their learners' lives – to create an environment where they feel safe and accepted and able to concentrate. Ladson-Billings (1990) purports that teachers need to be familiar with the culture and history of their students, similarly Delpit (1995) suggests that schools should be happy places for all children, particularly for poor children.

However, caution is to be exercised as the "caring" pedagogy may mask critical aspects and lead to soft rather than hard forms of intervention, reinforcing the discourse of deficit. In many instances the "caring" attitude results in teachers not challenging the learners academically or preempting that their home circumstances are not conducive to producing quality work (for example because of limited physical space in which to do homework). In addition, the caring approach may also be used as a mask to not confront inequalities in the education system. Teachers are generally caring people and may have the best intentions, but the caring approach alone can maintain a particular power relation.

It is worth noting that caring is as much an element of the human condition as is an indifference to dealing with diversity. Moreover, there is evidence in this study that demonstrates the teachers' willingness to address issues of diversity. As the teachers expressed what is referred to in this study as a caring pedagogy, they are presumably both willing and able to dialogue with learners about the social issues that confront them. Such a dialogical pedagogical process - according to Fay (1987) and drawing on Freire, (1987) - allows for an analysis of learners' expression of their personal experiences. So while the teacher shows willingness to favour a pastoral context of trust, care and support, the opportunity is seized to discover the learners' real needs and how they have become diluted and embedded into their sense of the world. This process according to Fay (1987), then speaks to the disguised but real meaning underlying the varied social

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conditions experienced by learners. By helping to remove a false sense of themselves and their world, the caring teacher then acts as a social agent, challenging people into changing the way they live and relate to others. Although critical pedagogical processes, if used, may inform learners of the grounds on which their attitudes and beliefs of others have been adopted, it does not necessarily offer teachers a frame for dealing with a sense of loss, doubt, conflict and confusion that learners may experience.

7.6.3 Institutional

The third level for dealing with diversity was at an institutional level, revealing both an assimilation and non-discriminatory approach. According to Zeichner et al (1991) schools as institutions traditionally prefer assimilation education, which fails to build on the individual learner's cultural resources. Banks (2001), Goduka (1999) and Eyber et al (1997) suggest that schools are important for building democracy and should actively embrace diversity, address inequalities and discriminatory practices.

7.6.3.1 Assimilation approach

An approach to diversity has been the assimilation tradition, which describes the school community in advance and demands compliance for acceptance; this reflects the practice in the USA, the UK and in SA.

In this study, teachers spoke of how the dominant groupings saw other learners as the ones who needed to change and adapt to the school. Some mentioned how schools were delaying the need to change despite the new school population. According to Naidoo (1996) and Dombrack (2007), a deficit discourse is often used to describe the "newcomers", and all learners are assumed to be the same and an attempt is made to treat

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them so and to encourage them to take on the norms of the dominant culture. It would appear that to attend a former model C school and succeed requires the ability to speak English or Afrikaans, espouse Christian values enjoy, rugby and hockey, adopt certain cultural values, adopt the ways of learning or feel excluded. Naidoo (1996) argues that learners are normally given powerful incentives to assimilate in order to have a chance of receiving meritocratic rewards. Those who do not conform are often discursively constructed as deviant (Dornbrack, 2007), which if unquestioned prevents more nuanced, layered ways of understanding. Dornbrack (2007) suggests disrupting the fixed stereotypical constructions of, for example, race that facilitates tendencies towards assimilationist practices. Challenging these naturalized constructions may lead to new ways of thinking and doing. Critical pedagogy involves a process of looking at how differences are located in unequal power relations and of developing ways of contesting these inequalities. In addition to race, other influences that locate and position people in terms of status, power and popularity are questioned. In the present study, the critical pedagogy approach led the author to challenge the fixed views that schools have of the status of language, religion and of the social class of learners, particularly those from economically deprived backgrounds.

While it was not always explicitly expressed, issues such as maintaining standards and the superiority of traditional norms, as well as fixed stereotypical categories seem to be an underlying assumption behind the assimilationist perspective. Moletsane (1999) argues that the assimilationist approach expects learners to fit into the existing ethos and culture of the school and for the school to continue to do business as usual. It would seem that learners of colour represent a threat to educational standards, lowering the performance of schools perceived as academically, culturally and racially superior. This is hardly challenged in

schools where excellent academic results are maintained and viewed as indicators of success.

The learners who speak a different language from the linguistic medium of the school, who practice a different religion to that of the teacher and those who also live in communities outside of the immediate school surroundings, contradict the homogenous approach to learning and teaching. This complexity requires further interrogation. The differences, if not thought through and planned for accordingly, render the system vulnerable to assimilation into the dominant culture of schools where there is a melting away of non-dominant cultural practices. This situation, if not tackled, contradicts education policy meant to create parity among its diverse groups of learners and continues to perpetuate discriminatory practices. So, given the tendency of teachers to apply the assimilationist approach to dealing with diversity, a strategy whereby teachers explore and engage with the effects of fixed stereotypical representations of people is suggested. According to Dombrack (2007), if educators are encouraged to see difference as dynamic and fluid rather than fixed, they might be more inclined to acknowledge the multiple influences of context and power on representations of difference. They may also become aware of the restrictive effects of reducing difference to single determinants such as race, religion and class and strive to overcome these restrictions.

7.6.3.2 Non–discriminatory approach

This approach was perceived to involve a rigorous process of promoting meaningful interactions in the classroom, playgrounds and in extra-mural activities without discriminating on the basis of race, language, religion, socio-economic background or learning styles.

It is noted that diversity is not merely about changing the demographics of the learners and staff, but rather to inculcate a deeper understanding of diversity and its consequences on the lives of learners and educators. Managing diversity is about all learners receiving a pedagogy that is without prejudice or discrimination, a situation not without its challenges. In this study there is evidence of teachers discussing the need to challenge and contest discriminatory practices. The study of the extracts from the questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion indicates that both learners and teachers can be subjected to stereotypical constructions and discrimination, especially within contexts where there are unequal power relations. For example, coloured parents expressed the need for white teachers to teach their children at former model C schools. The coloured teachers were categorized as unequipped and incapable. According to Dornbrack (2007), the creation of dialogic spaces allows for realizing how viewing certain groups impede a full understanding of others. Understanding the fluid nature of difference might facilitate more equitable practices at schools.

Both the concept and the experience of diversity provide an important, if seldom utilized opportunity to debate how power imbalances in the larger society pervade the classroom. Social inequalities will continue to exist as long as teachers, parents and learners hold existing prejudices and often deeply entrenched bias regarding culture, race and class.

Many teachers spoke about the difficulties they encounter when attempting to provide for diversity in their planning processes, signaling the gap between their experiences and the learners they teach. Unless an attempt is made to really understand the diverse experiences of the learners and infuse this into the planning process, planning may remain a technical exercise. Lindsey et al (1999) suggest that schools are not homogenous sites and propose that a focus on inclusivity be given to

planning when working with diverse populations. From a policy perspective, the Manifesto on Values document and the Department's White Paper 6 remain helpful documents when planning programmes.

7.7 CONCLUSION

In the diverse South African context it is important to look at how teachers understanding diversity and all factors that teachers need to confront in the classroom. These varied contexts offer opportunities to deepen the conceptualization of diversity.

The conceptual framework as outlined above in this chapter, informs the ways in which diversity is understood and dealt with in the classroom and at school in general.

Three overarching categories were created, namely social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles and these form the basis of the teachers' conceptual understanding of diversity as well as of their practical interventions to deal with it in the classroom.

This chapter also explored diversity strategies to asses how teachers deal with diversity at a personal, classroom and institutional level.

In the next chapter a synthesis of the study and its implications for policy and practice are discussed.

CHAPTER EIGHT
SYNTHESIS, IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE, CONCLUSIONS

8.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a synthesis of the study and outlines the implications of this study for policy and practice. The implications for policy and practice are cognisant of the small size of the sample, and thus offer only tentative insights into the factors that are to be addressed when dealing with diversity in a South African setting.

The chapter also documents the limitations of the study and highlights areas of research that need further investigation.

8.2   SYNTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The research sought to examine teachers' perceptions of diversity and how they manage diversity in the classroom. The study was conducted on a sample of 50 primary school teachers in the Cape Peninsula of the Western Cape, South Africa.

A review of the literature on diversity and classroom practice revealed that, while research on multi-culturalism in the USA and UK highlighted the challenges teachers are confronted with in terms of classroom practice, it is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa, and certainly one that warrants further research.

The international literature revealed that diverse classroom environments enhance learning opportunities and offer learners better life chances (Cushner et al, 1992; Banks, 1995; Yon, 2000). According to Sleeter and Grant (2003), the curriculum must provide the learners with the

opportunities to practice democracy and decision making but also with teachers using high standards and ability affirmation regarding knowledge and skills. In South Africa, the migration of learners from township schools to better-resourced schools has resulted in some fear at privileged schools that an influx of township learners may lead to lower standards and the compromise of performance.

Both international and local studies revealed that teacher preparedness and strategies for dealing with diversity were influenced by the context in which teachers operate. This study reveals that despite the varied historical contexts of education in South Africa, many teachers offered rather similar views regarding their understanding of diversity, but had to deal with different issues given their school context and geographical setting. The interconnectedness of race, language, religion, socio-economic factors (poverty), social factors, learning styles and resources are highlighted as the main issues that the teachers confront in the classrooms.

From a theoretical perspective, the teachers' experience of diversity was explored within the framework of critical theory and critical multiculturalism. This method was chosen because it is suited to not only recognize and describe differences, but also to challenge the inequalities that exist in South African schools. Diversity, which has been located within critical-multiculturalism, points to the complexity of the issue confronting teachers in South Africa (Hemson, 2003; May, 1999). It illuminates the unequal power relations experienced in terms of race, class, languages and religion (Carrim, 1999; Soudien, 2000; Chisholm, 2001; Hemson, 2003) as outlined previously and points to diversity as multi-layered with interlinking factors.

This study showed that despite the political changes, the approach to diversity was mainly in the form of multi-cultural celebrations in the classroom based on rather stereotypical forms, assimilation into the dominant school culture, and portraying a caring pedagogy in the teachers' daily practice. They expressed a "caring pedagogy", since a class of learners consists of individuals with unique competencies, different backgrounds, pace of learning, learning styles and social problems, but with the ability to reach their potential.

The present study offered a critique of the feasibility of critical pedagogy as a means of dealing with diversity. It draws attention to the fact that this theoretical framework approach fails to offer a practical response to diversity management. The theoretical framework does, however, present an important reconceptualisation of ways to deal with diversity in the classroom.

As already outlined in previous chapters, drawn from data and supported by literature, schools face an array of challenges (Chisholm and Vally, 1994). These challenges may range from resources in the form of physical infrastructure, to materials and financial support. In many instances, the lack of resources and finance remains a challenge for communities discriminated against during apartheid. The schools that are struggling economically often cannot live up to the expectations placed on them, while those schools that have a broader spread of diversity are not dealing with it meaningfully. There is also much ill health in socio-economically deprived conditions adding to the teachers' educational challenges.

The study revealed that schools have moved from being homogenous institutions to sites with diverse learner populations, and this poses challenges for classroom practice. Socio-economic factors and the home environment influence the child's learning experience. In the case of this

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study, the majority of respondents identified poor social-health as a challenge to meaningful learning and drew attention to socio-economic factors that influence access to quality learning and teaching.

The teachers in this study cited that the challenges are greater when learners come from less stable financial backgrounds compared to those who come from more secure financial settings. It would appear that schools that have below average resources are probably not dealing with broad diversity issues but with poor socio-economics, as diversity in its broader sense affects the model C schools mostly.

However, despite the above conditions, the teachers reported that issues of diversity as evident in this study are receiving some attention in the classrooms. Although the literature cited included institutional factors, the findings reported mainly on the teachers' personal and classroom level experiences, and less on the institutional. However, this was not too surprising, as the questions did not really direct teachers to talk about institutional processes. It might be useful to engage in further research with a focus area that will include institutional issues.

The educational context and setting for this study was informed by the constitution of South Africa, instituted in 1996, with education having a role to play in the development of a society based on the values of the constitution – democracy, human rights, human dignity, respect for cultural diversity, and non-racialism. Where previously apartheid education policy dominated schools, new education policy and more specifically, the National Curriculum Statements emphasize its commitment to a quality education for all citizens, free from all forms of discrimination. The curriculum is underpinned by the principle and values of the SA constitution and seeks to ensure that learners enjoy a

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curriculum that provides them with opportunities to develop high knowledge and high skills for citizenship and the world of work.

Focusing on the study in relation to legislation and policy, South African education has a plethora of policies (e.g. South African Schools Act 1996; National Curriculum Statements, 2003), mandating schools to provide equal opportunities for all learners. In addition, the policies offer guidelines to promote a culture of social justice and inclusivity. However, in reviewing the issues at schools through the lens of critical pedagogy, schools are still grappling with the apartheid legacy of separate and unequal relations that typify society in South Africa. Although political influence punctuates the curriculum rhetoric, the reality reveals that schooling in South Africa continues to be fragmented and inequitable with the poor still experiencing many hardships. From this study, there can be no doubt that geography, language, social class and economic factors continue to exclude the majority of learners from quality learning.

In this regard the comment by one of the participants is pertinent:

> *When are we going to level the playing fields, our buildings are still bad, have no proper sport fields...can't afford to purchase apparatus so I get my parents to come and help make...the NCS is a good policy document but it does not always work... the government officials just develop them without thinking about us, we also have teaching experience and skills...social justice used too easy as democracy has not done much yet, there is still division between the poor and the rich* (Interview, February, 2005).

As the philosophy of apartheid was based on separatism and legislation that suppressed contact and interaction between people of different races and cultures, current socialisation towards desegregation is not without its difficulties. The apartheid system prevented communities from

communicating with one another, creating a false sense of "white" superiority and black "inferiority", with the poor generally being the main victims of a divided society. The social justice agenda is imperative to address the legacy of apartheid in all areas of human activity, particularly education. Social transformation in education is aimed at ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sectors of the population (DoE, 2003). In particular, the social goals of the curriculum are sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, religion, culture, traditions, language, disability, learning styles, similar to issues that have emerged from this study. This confirms that South Africa's policies reflect a strong commitment to quality education and social justice; however it may be that the policies could be criticized for being too ambitious and not practical. The teachers are unanimous that the system needs to change, but that it is more effective to gradually introduce changes and to learn from examples of good practice (Robinson and Soudien, 2008). A forward-moving policy framework represents a vision for the fundamental overhaul of education in South Africa and foregrounds diversity classroom practice. Most problematic to date has been the lack of a common understanding of the curriculum, specifically the infusion of the social goals of the new curriculum within the planning of lessons.

According to Pendlebury and Enslin (2004), the educational imbalances of the past remain unrealised for learners who, whether by choice or circumstance, remain outside of the school system or other structured opportunities for systematic learning. These children are generally excluded for reasons of poverty, disease, conflict and associated conditions, and are hence denied the opportunity of a holistic education.

Teachers generally use their pedagogical skills to contribute to the holistic development of the child in their care. Grant and Sleeter (1997) argue that

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understanding the learners' social background and upbringing is an important element in making the connection between the home, curriculum and classroom. Furthermore social conditions, teaching conditions and lack of resources militate against optimal achievement. McLaren (1989) therefore argues that a critical pedagogy encourages teachers to respond to current social issues, and in so doing develop a critical and political attitude towards issues of diversity.

This study aimed to respond to current social issues and was located within a critical theory paradigm, indicating commitment to a more just social order. In so doing it purports that the role of education in the construction of social relations must be challenged, for example by insisting that the politics of race and class be addressed as components of the transformation process. If the intention is to optimise human potential, as is the case in the present study, then the shift is towards a more critical consciousness exhibited in political as well as practical action to change social conditions. Critical theory-based research that circulates the discourse of qualitative research (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1988) can lead to empowerment. It seeks to produce transformations in the social order, producing knowledge that is historical and structural, judged by its degree of historical situatedness and its ability to produce action (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). The guiding ethics of this research embodied social and political ideals of equality and justice. These ethics resonate with critical pedagogy, which is based on empowering the powerless and transforming existing social inequalities and injustice. Critical theorists (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1987; McLaren, 1989) argue that it is imperative for teachers to understand the important role which schooling plays in joining knowledge and power, and its impact on the development of critical and competent citizens. In this study critical pedagogy was used in a dialogic manner to ascertain whether teachers understand the contribution offered by schools with regard to the perception of race, class, language, religion and forms

of diversity practices. It also explored whether teachers regarded and experienced schools as sites that mainly reproduce the values and privileges of existing elites. This study showed that while teachers understood diversity in broad terms, their practice generally is not politically driven.

Critical pedagogy, while politically sound, did not appear to inform the daily practice of the teachers in this study. Grant and Sleeter (1997) argue that theories have value only when they can be demonstrated and used in daily practice, because what is required are concrete possibilities. In this research it is evident that the teachers are using a range of possible topics and approaches in a practical way as entry points to address classroom concerns related to race, class, disability, language and religion. Grant and Sleeter (1997) support the multicultural approach, but suggest the importance of reflecting on the lesson is critical in order to improve it to "turn on learning", and thereby promoting a social reconstructionist approach to teaching. The assumption was that as the new curriculum espouses social change, critical pedagogy could be the basis for classroom practice. This was not evident in this study, as multiculturalism and a caring pedagogy informed the teachers' daily practice.

However, the use of critical pedagogy is useful, as it allowed for the viewing of action and structure as mutually constitutive of each other. It provides a way for examining structural conditions, such as policy, and their connections with individual actions such as teaching. It provides a particularly useful framework for the study of the connection between education policy and classroom practice, since teachers' work takes place in uniquely complex social and organizational contexts such as schools.

Furthermore, critical pedagogy allows the context of teaching to be foregrounded. The apartheid past with its many imbalances and the efforts

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to make shifts in a democratic South Africa add much needed contextual information to what was previously understood about diversity by teachers and their responses to diversity management. This perspective is broadening in terms of developing knowledge in relation to diversity management and the contexts of teaching. It also supplements the understanding of varying responses to policy on the part of different teachers.

The critical pedagogy framework allows for the study of classroom practice in relation to the policy environment, the contexts of teachers' work, as well as teachers' efforts to make meaning of the multiple dimensions of their teaching practice in a society confronted with varied power relations.

Upon a closer examination of the interplay of factors, what stood out was that diversity was understood as an all-encompassing concept underscored by notions of social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles. The social condition of schools and the history of education in South Africa all impact on the various manifestations of diversity the teachers need to deal with at schools and in the classrooms. The study also showed that a multicultural approach guided their management of diversity in the classroom. The teachers suggested that the teaching of diversity should be grounded in a positive and caring terrain. In part it should include knowledge and understanding of the various forms of diversity in South Africa and beyond. Contextual factors play an important role in influencing quality teaching and learning and it is for this reason that a qualitative research study was considered to be the most appropriate.

Furthermore, evidence from this study suggests that despite the varied contexts of teaching, the teachers report a willingness to deal with issues

of diversity and that they do consider an array of teaching approaches, given the learning styles and abilities of learners. The approach to this study was also to pay attention to the wider social and economic inequalities which influence the teaching processes. It aimed at offering insights into understanding inequalities and disadvantages of the education system in South Africa. These phenomena are particularly overt in a context like South Africa where issues of ethnicity, social class and race are likely to influence the structuring of learning opportunities. It explores the barriers to learning posed by tensions originating form structural unevenness of power in communities of practice and how such unevenness can contribute to exclusion. Incorporating the broader issue of social and economic inequalities into the analysis process is particularly significant in a South Africa context characterized by widespread social and economic inequities.

From a methodological perspective, the qualitative approach allowed for a more nuanced documentation of how teachers offered their interventions to deal with diversity. As the study did not include classroom observation, the focus was on gathering the views on how teachers construct their understanding of diversity in relation to their context. The research therefore gathered information on teachers writing and talking about diversity practices.

The data analysis, using constant comparison (Miles and Huberman, 1998; Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2005) revealed that race, language, religion, poverty, social factors, learning styles and resources were the main issues that teachers confront at schools, with the overarching categories being social justice, multi-culturalism and learning styles. Data revealed that multi-culturalism is the main form of diversity-oriented intervention. Simultaneously the teachers' actions were also influenced by the three traditions of the social reconstructionist approach (Liston and

Zeichner, 1991), namely the academic, social-efficiency and developmentalist traditions. The respondents were less engaged in consciously attempting to move towards a more just society (though their caring attitude towards the learners in their care may well have that effect).

8.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Many countries are engaging in educational change in order to meet the needs of the economy and society, with governments acknowledging the central role of education and teachers for change in the education system to be effective (Hargreaves, 1995). While some policies are in place to deal with imbalances in education, it is imperative to evaluate the efficacy of policy in terms of implementation and delivery. Through revealing some of the inequalities in diversity, the study highlights the policy gaps that require attention.

Education operates within the context of the principles and values of the South African Constitution. Therefore intrinsic to democracy and the right of citizens, a system of learning and teaching within the context of clearly understood diversity principles, rights, responsibilities and values is paramount.

As spelt out in policy documents, the recognition that a particular kind of teacher would be necessary to teach the new social goals of education was not translated into an understanding of what would be necessary to "create" such a teacher. It is clear from the training the teachers received on diversity, that not much time or space was allocated to talk about diversity in a non–threatening manner. This is regarded as a shortcoming in the mediation of the new curriculum and policy to teachers. Teacher development has been sporadic and poorly co-ordinated (Taylor and

Vinjevold, 1999). Once-off workshops without follow-up or support have been the order of the day, and according to Adler (2002) such workshops and courses of limited duration are ineffective in developing pedagogical knowledge. The present study suggests that sustained teacher diversity development programmes over extended periods of time that take into consideration the varied contexts of teaching are more likely to have a lasting impact on teachers than once-off workshops. However, financial constraints and underdevelopment force developing countries such as South Africa to prioritise programmes (Christie et al, 2004), and the importance of diversity development programmes is moved to the back in favour of more basic education needs.

Change at classroom level is the most difficult to achieve, and yet it is there where it matters most, not only in terms of curricular knowledge, but also for inculcating the democratic values for the new society. This - according to Harland and Kinder (1997) - only happens when there is congruency between policy intentions and teacher beliefs about good practice or values.

Therefore, what is required in terms of professional development of teachers is the creation of space for interaction on a continuous manner to take place, in particular, in South Africa with its segregated political past. Being successful in diversity education requires acquiring a new set of knowledge and competencies. These include having professional skills and other conceptions of pedagogy as diversity (i) is socio-politically, economically and legally necessary; (ii) offers opportunities to improve the life chances of learners; (iii) is influenced by contextual conditions; (iv) is linked to power relations; (v) is critical to learning and teaching; (vi) involves compassion and multiple approaches. The teachers are to be reflective and ensure that the learners are able to function in socially heterogeneous groups. It might be helpful to devise a well-balanced

system of in-service education on diversity for teachers, away from homogenous training that is based on the dominant culture of the institution where they are employed.

The diverse learning context implies a different role for teachers. Teachers need to learn new skills and to keep up to date with new knowledge and pedagogical ideas in the field of diversity education. Smylie, Bay and Tozer (1999) posit that teachers learn best when they are active in directing their own learning and when their opportunities to learn are focused on concrete tasks and dilemmas that emanate from their daily encounters with pupils. Such opportunities should be based on enquiry, experimentation and reflection. Furthermore, such opportunities should be intensive, ongoing, allowing for collaboration and interaction between teachers and educational professionals (Maistry, 2005). The space is also to be provided for teachers to share pressures and burdens that result from policy changes. Such centres for the sharing of experiences may serve as powerful sites of transformation (Kennedy, 2005).

As expressed by the teachers in this study, diversity classroom practices can enhance the relationships between teacher and learner and learner and learner. Although the outcomes do not emerge simply through the introduction of multi-culturalism into the learning setting, it does however begin the process of facilitating collaborative learning about diversity, which however requires more reflection on issues such as prejudice, stereotyping and cultural generalization. To create effective diversity learning systems, the South African education system has to make significant changes to teacher development, teacher support, governance and management of education. The current policy without meaningful pressure and support will not do much to address the diversity challenges and problems faced by the teachers in the classroom. Recognition by monitoring and quality assurance systems of the outcomes of education in

the range of settings in which learning takes place include the need to provide opportunities for learners and teachers to demonstrate their newly acquired values, skills and knowledge in terms of diversity.

The development of a diversity policy in conjunction with the other policies such as the language and religion policies may be a means to prompt schools to examine their practices. The framework suggested (discussed later) may be used as a guide in the development of such a policy – exploring school organization and management, professional development and curriculum development.

Revisiting policy in relation to diversity classroom practices is an ongoing phenomenon, as policy needs to be informed by the challenges experienced in the classroom. The development of a diversity curriculum is a process that allows learners to truly understand each other's – a process underpinned by values such as respect and non-discriminatory practices.

The contrast between the teachers' statements about diversity and their ideas about teaching   expression about their understanding of diversity and their ideas about teaching found in the "stories' they related about their practice, is significant. It may therefore be useful to examine the relationship between theory and practice in this field. To put it more pointedly: What is about teaching that makes it so difficult to translate concepts into practice?

The teachers' account about what informed their perceptions and their context of teaching suggest some answers to these questions and point to a possible framework for furthering an understanding of what teachers actually do/fail to do in relation to diversity. In contrast to policy, it would seem that the teachers viewed the teaching for diversity as separate to

the formal learning processes that are used to measure learning and teaching in schools.

The teachers' classroom management raises some interesting questions about the relationship between thinking about diversity and doing it. How then do teachers manage the tension and contradictions so inherent in their work? The tensions in a teachers' work are influenced by enduring contradictions, between what it seems other people in various positions of power expect and what a teacher thinks must be done. Their work is also influenced by the culture of the institution. It would appear that, regardless of the classroom context, essential contradictions in relation to policy and practice in teaching persist.

While there are developments in terms of policy and diversity, it is evident from the study that prejudice and discrimination are still prevalent. The learners enter the school with the prejudices learnt at home, and most schools simply do not have the means to challenge these prejudices or to transform the learners' minds. The teachers exhibited very little understanding in constructing a learning environment free from discrimination and prejudice. There is a general policy gap in the area of diversity, and there are limited methods in place for dealing with such sensitive issues as those relating to diversity. It is hoped that this study will inform education policy and assist in the development of programmes to deal with diversity in a programmatic manner.

Teacher development programmes, according to Clark (1999), should be sensitive to complex local conditions. The needs and the existing capabilities of teachers are to be acknowledged and respected. So, in developing diversity programmes in South Africa, due cognizance is to be given to the fact that apartheid education created huge inequities in education. General working conditions, resource deprivation and poor

social conditions are factors that inhibit the potential of teachers' collaboration and their ability to participate and engage in teacher development sessions. Hargreaves (1995) reminds us that teachers' hopes and fears are deeply embedded within and to some extent limited by the historically ingrained structures within which they work.

The programmes are to relate to the diversity issues spoken about by teachers, and to the work they have been doing in this regard. Such programmes should be informed by the teachers' current practices, but they also need to acknowledge the historical imbalances in South African education. Teacher development dealing with diversity must provide the opportunities for teachers to talk about their own personal experiences and the issues they confront at schools, and programmes need to be rolled out for the development of skills for dealing with the many diverse issues and the socio-economic difficulties that face education. Day (1999) reminds us that the lives of teachers are immensely complex, and teachers often work under stressful conditions and in difficult contexts. The institutionally imposed complex curriculum change is often a major contributory factor. The challenge is to create a supportive environment for teachers facing the challenges of diversity classroom practice.

8.4   IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Reflecting on the factors that emerged from the research question of this study, the following is a summary of insights aimed at providing value for future work in curriculum development, classroom practice and diversity.

The new curriculum policy framework for teaching in South Africa offers teachers the space to develop programmes to deal with diversity. However, as expressed by the sample, for implementation to occur in a meaningful way in the classroom, systemic changes that include the

distribution of resources, upgrading of school facilities, the reduction of class sizes and less administrative work is required. There is evidence of the goodwill to make things happen in the classroom, but it is dependent on regular programmes for teachers, leadership at schools and provision of resources. For diversity programmes to be effective, all teachers must be involved and have the necessary infrastructure to ensure optimal success (Day, 1999).

The NCS presented a framework that presumed that the qualities of a reflective teacher would come to the fore naturally, that teachers would have the ability to not only recognize the challenges, but also to act upon them. This study revealed that teachers have identified, and responded partially to the diversity needs of learners, but report that conditions such as a supportive school climate will create an increasingly conducive environment to respond more comprehensively.

In relation to the social-reconstructionist approach, as presented by Liston and Zeichner (1991), the teachers seemed to confine themselves to the first three traditions (academic tradition, social-efficiency, developmentalist tradition), but seem to neglect to respond to the fourth tradition, which is the movement towards a more just society. It may be that the first three traditions provide them with a sense of control within the boundary of their classroom. The fourth tradition on the other hand takes them out of their comfort zone and puts them in a position to confront hierarchy, authority and imbalances.

As the curriculum was grounded on the new constitution of South Africa, the assumption was that teachers would be inspired to make changes to their curriculum, be prepared to deal with the consequences of change and willing to bring about political change. However, in real terms the teachers were confronted with issues of diversity, large classes,

disciplinary problems, administration overload, the demand of content knowledge and teaching strategies, and in many cases a lack of resources. It shows that the principles and values underpinning change in the educational system in order to promote social justice, are incongruent with the environment in which teachers have to function.

The study draws attention to understanding teaching and learning within challenging classroom situations (large classes, poor resources), and advocates improved conditions. What is therefore required is the reconceptualisation of the relationship between classroom conditions, teaching strategies, policy and social justice aspirations in developing a framework for dealing with diversity.

8.5   TEACHING FOR DIVERSITY: FRAMEWORK

While it is clear that there can be no-one-size-fits-all approach to classroom practice the following classroom-based action framework is offered as a way of addressing diversity in the classroom (Table 8.1). These suggestions are intended to address the shortcomings and challenges in the study. The framework aims to present some ideas to problems of practice faced by teachers, cognisant of the fact that it is up to the teacher to determine what works on a class-by-class basis. The framework does not use a "recipe" approach, but it offer insights into the social and cultural issues that influence education in South Africa.

The framework lists practices that could be applied and offers some ideas on how it could be approached. The findings show that four aspects need to be addressed: (i) there is a need to challenge prejudices and stereotypes, (ii) teaching must be conducted in a manner that all learners gain optimal growth and development (iii) there has to be a review of curriculum development and classroom management; (iv) there is a need

to establish appropriate lesson planning and content for teaching for diversity. As is Grant and Sleeter's *Turning on Learning*, (1997), teachers are showed how to apply ideas in the classroom. It is noted that theories have value only when they can be demonstrated and used in daily practice with some concrete possibilities. While the framework does not give specific lesson plans as in *Turning on Learning* (Grant and Sleeter, 1997), the intent is to assist teachers to develop their own analytical and creative teaching skills in relation to diversity in a South African context emerging from a separate and conflictual past.

The framework suggests that culture not be viewed stereotypically and that teaching embraces learners as unique individuals to be developed holistically. Different teaching perspectives are therefore to be taken into consideration when working with a diverse population of learners. The framework raises awareness of some of the factors and processes that impact on diversity teaching. These require teachers and learners to learn together from one another, a practice not necessarily part of traditional pedagogy. The ideas offered by the teachers favour the provision of opportunities for teachers and learners to explore diversity and place emphasis on the co-construction of programmes, which is a meaningful way to begin to understand what is happening regarding diversity. However, it was not clear whether (and if so, how) teachers explored ways in which learners themselves could be involved in the learning process. It is true that the teachers spoke of developing lessons drawn from their learners' background, and of involving their learners as active participants in the formulation of new knowledge. However, the teachers' descriptions of their own classroom practice did not reveal much learner involvement in curriculum planning, exploration and discovery.

Although most teachers referred to knowing the backgrounds of their learners, a number spoke of the lack of mechanisms in place to assist with

creating the opportunities. However, as shown in previous sections, the teachers are generally supportive of their learners, but feel frustrated by the lack of systemic intervention in the form of diversity education, resources and training in schools. Most educators in this study illustrated concern that they were not capable of tackling diversity issues in a structured and conscious manner. They expressed that they needed diversity training to deal with issues in often volatile, unpredictable situations. It is noted that mandatory diversity training for teachers has not yet been implemented in South Africa.

The framework shows that the "how" aspects are addressed as a component of the "what" aspects as well. The findings in the data show a variety of approaches to be used in teachers' attempts to deal with diversity in the classroom. The philosophical approaches are suggested to improve conditions for all learners in a diverse setting, and also offered in relation to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values for dealing with diversity in the classroom.

Table 8.1: Teaching for diversity: a framework

What	How	Approach
Challenge prejudices and stereotypes	Encourage participation, understanding and respect for others. Introduce learners to a range of cultural practices. Never make assumptions. Show similarities and differences. Let learners get to know one another. Improve positive social interaction and relationships. Diversity should be seen as a multi-faceted concept.	Dealing with diversity as a social justice phenomenon should be stressed. Educational equity should be aspired to and respecting others used as a means to discourage prejudices and the promotion and perpetuation of stereotypes. Deal with issues of racism and discrimination as a process. Teachers are to confront their own prejudices and stereotypes.
Teach so that all involved gain optimal growth and development	Encourage both collectivism and individualism. Treat learners firstly as individuals. Teachers to deal with a range of methodologies. Engender a culture of diversity empowerment. Teachers to be sensitive to the needs of learners. Have a holistic approach. Reduce cultural and language barriers.	Teachers need to be sensitized to appreciate the context within which learning takes place in South Africa, connecting to learners' experiences and interests. There should be awareness regarding the socio-economic influences and factors which impact on development at schools. Teachers need to be aware of their own fears and biases about diversity issues. Teachers need to use a multi-modal approach – aware of learning styles of learners. Plan to accommodate the varied learning barriers of learners.
Curriculum development and classroom management	Create an awareness of culture, traditions and religion. The classroom environment should encourage dialogue and respect and awareness of the other. Show sensitivity in the use of language and enhance language development. See to it that curriculum redress takes place to ensure that a culture of learning be established. Develop a safe space for sharing and learning. Teachers should attend courses to improve knowledge and gain skills to deal with diversity.	Curriculum planning should include all role players and include different modalities and forms of resources. All programmes to make use of relevant activities and should be critically appraised. Have a reflective approach to teaching, with critical thinking skills. Foster pastoral care and respect for the other. Be sensitive to and aware of the diverse needs of the learners. Apply a holistic, cross-curriculum approach. Have the appropriate resources.
Lesson plans and content	Teach content based on school, community, universal needs and available resources. The age group of the learners should determine the aspects that are taught. Teachers and learners to construct programmes that work for them. The learners should not be denied access to diversity programmes. Lessons should encourage critical debate regarding diversity.	African culture should be understood and promoted. The imbalances regarding facilities, equipment, resources should be addressed to ensure a meaningful culture of learning is established. Resources should be made accessible to all schools. Sharing of good practices to be encouraged and supported.

The framework provides a basis for teachers to examine how they deal with diversity and to determine what works and what does not work in their schools and classrooms. In this regard teachers are to pose critical questions and seek to redress the unjust order created by Fundamental Pedagogics (Goduka, 1999), especially in the light of the social justice agenda of the new curriculum. Teachers have personal belief systems and may find it difficult to let go of their traditions and orientations even in a post-apartheid era. It would seem that the complexities of power relations and the impact these have on learning remain a challenge for teachers seeking strategies to deal with diversity despite the many useful strategies and approaches to deal with diversity as suggested by Goduka (1999), Grant and Sleeter (1997), Banks (1995) and Cushner et al (1992).

8.6 RECONCEPTUALISATION OF DIVERSITY: A CRITICAL APPROACH TO INEQUALITIES IN DIVERSITY

In South Africa multi-cultural education has been criticized and contested, as it seems to be used as a guise to reinforce the protected interests of certain groups at the expense of others. This contested terrain places much tension on the role of the teacher, who as a rule belongs to one of these groups and now is faced with many questions in the light of changes in South African education.

Aligning the new curriculum to an educational approach linked to critical pedagogy, critical educators are to perceive their primary function as emancipatory and their primary purpose as a commitment to creating the conditions for learners to develop skills, knowledge and modes of inquiry that will allow them to critically examine the role that society has played in their self–formation (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985). Classrooms and

schools are to become sites where young people envision and enact democratic life.

Ayers et al (2009) argue that educators, who desire transformation, must be mindful of the ways that injustices have been historicized and naturalized through everyday current theories, policies, and practices and acknowledge the intersectionality of social justice. The overlap between race, class and language in South Africa remains an area of interest and contestation.

Any analysis of social justice requires the development of a critical theory of empowerment, a term which refers to the reconstruction of power – a shift from being subjugated to a particular dominant group. Empowerment is examined in the light of it being an ongoing cyclic process of change faced with resistance, benign approaches, tension and conflict.

The new national curriculum statement of education in South Africa, underpinned by a social justice agenda places emphasis on exposing the discrimination experienced by people daily and equipping all learners to live with diversity. The concern is that while attempts have been made to accommodate diversity in the classroom by the teachers in this study, not much has been done to move beyond the "tourist approach' (Goduka, 1999). The teachers seem to be stuck at a multi-cultural approach that does not provide learners with the tools that they need to interact effectively with diversity. The multi-cultural celebratory approach fails to inculcate critical thought about prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination, it includes activities that are stereotypical and patronizing which, if left unchallenged, will remain at a superficial level (Grant and Sleeter, 1997) and run the risk of reinforcing the very attitudes that need to be challenged. It would seem that it will need strong opposing forces to break the pattern, but in the absence of a deeper understanding of diversity issues and of well designed programmes at schools, the formerly

variously disadvantaged learners may continue to be treated unfairly by the educational system. Aspects of their disadvantagement include socio-economic status, culture, language, background and race will continue to be unfairly treated by the educational system. Currently there are so many other programmes intended to improve the quality of learning and teaching at schools that programmes and policies that are intended to promote social justice and diversity are not considered a priority.

This research has shown that the pedagogies suggested by teachers, the curricula they construct, the beliefs and attitudes that shape their decisions, and the actions they take to challenge inequities have all been shaped by past apartheid experiences. The beneficiaries of the learning process, the learners, are subjected to information as seen through the lens of teachers. Diversity education is political and ideological and has implications for an emerging curriculum aimed at creating an ideal and democratic society. Given the creation of the new South Africa, many issues within education remain contested, and dealing with diversity thus becomes a compromised aspect of education.

In a situation where the racial and language classification of the teacher was the same as the learners their contexts interconnected into a sense of "us" in relation to people classified as belonging to another race, language or culture group. For example, the teachers spoke of black children as follows, "they have a different culture and they cannot speak English properly". Further aggravating the situation is the strained relationship between the different races at schools; some teachers spoke about how children on the one hand feel discriminated against, while other children described how children from less advantaged backgrounds (often black children) invaded their space.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, these descriptions of "them" and "us" may not seem strange to teachers who have not questioned the unequal power relations that exist in society. Language and race were functions of social stratification in apartheid South Africa. On the other hand, we now witness deepening class differences between people belonging to supposedly homogenous race and language groups and supposedly sharing the same culture. The challenge therefore for teachers is to recognize the oppressive features of hegemonic control that often exist "unknowingly" in the classroom. These features of power are mainly linked to race and class (Goduka, 1999).

Differences are "tolerated" and "accommodated" and not dealt with in a programmatic manner that is not arrogant, dismissive and disrespectful of the needs of others. Unless core issues of diversity (prejudice, stereotyping, generalizations, superiority and inferiority beliefs) are addressed more deeply, showing respect for the other remains vulnerable with tension and conflict always lingering and readily ignited in unpleasant forms. Critical theory is therefore particularly useful for examining diversity classroom practice in an education system riddled with imbalances instituted by the past unjust education system.

The teachers still perceive schooling as neutral, underpinned by the mystification of fundamental pedagogy that hides the political function of schooling. The task of re-imagining schools as sites that serve the quest for social justice is not really foregrounded. For the teachers this means acquiring a critical understanding of the language, modes of experiences and the background of learners with whom they work. Paulo Freire (1987) emphasizes the need to base pedagogical projects on the lived experiences of the learners themselves.

In terms of critical pedagogy, teaching should include sociological enquiry and that teachers create classroom conditions for those deemed "other" to reclaim their own histories and voices (Giroux, 1997). It is recommended that curricula promote relationships between authority, ethics and power central to pedagogy; the relationship should expand rather than close down the possibilities of a democratic society (McLaren, 1998).

While policy expects teachers to deal with diversity in the classroom, it fails to acknowledge that teachers who are expected to manage these practices have not been allowed the space to deal with their own diverse backgrounds and values, which has informed their teaching. According to Weldon (2006), it is insufficient to put a curriculum aimed at transforming society in place without giving due attention to those who have the task of implementing it. Teachers are expected to deliver a social justice curriculum but have not been engaged and equipped to deal with it in a meaningful way. This requires deep personal and professional change to deal with the inequalities in education. This study has revealed the need for space to be created offering the opportunities for dialogue, support, learning and understanding regarding diversity and social justice. The space includes acknowledging the context of education in South Africa for the underprivileged, where the progress is slow and tenuous and demands years of back-breaking hard work to teach children to read and write for example.

The teachers have shown the potential, even though they have had minimal support, which provides an indication that it is possible to bring about change if teachers are supported through professional development programmes.

8.7 BUILDING ON RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTING TO KNOWLEDGE

A review of the literature on diversity revealed that while much research regarding diversity and classroom practice has been conducted internationally, there is a further need for South African research, although recent interventions and studies have started to focus on these issues.

8.7.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was framed within critical multiculturalism and critical pedagogy since South Africa is characterised by imbalances with regard to social, political and economic power relations. This study found that it is not the notion of critical theory that drives the teachers' classroom practice, but rather a caring pedagogy which informs daily practice. Teachers spoke enthusiastically about caring and knowing their learners, emphasising in their learners a respect for the other and celebrating differences through acknowledging festivals, cultural days, sport days and other social activities. Although many made mention of the socio-political inequalities that persist in society, their focus was on what they were able to do or not do in their classroom (constrained by lack of resources, limited training in diversity practice) to bring about change.

In order to challenge the status qou and work towards social justice, teachers are to give attention to the politics of education. Barry (2001) makes the point that what is frequently seen as a cultural difference is in effect one of material circumstance. While it is so that the rich and the poor may have difficulty in empathizing and identifying with one another, this is not a matter of cultural diversity, nor should it be treated as congruent with race. Socio-economic differences remain the divisive factor.

The study revealed that while multi-culturalism may be challenged, it could at least be applied in the classroom (May, 1999) as an entry into dealing with diversity. The same cannot be said for critical pedagogy. However, teachers need to equip their learners with the skills and the tools to develop a critical awareness for themselves. This would include the correct terminology and the language needed for developing particular concepts, rather than just simplistic explanations of culture. Through such a process, learners can be enabled to rethink relationships between things and reflect on reality and on the processes of human activity if they are provided with the space and knowledge to do so. It is essential that tension be created in learners' understanding if they are to move from their concrete understanding of diversity to a more abstract level of understanding; this can only be mediated by the teacher who has a critical approach to the process of learning.

Having said this, the data has indicated that teachers are showing effort and insight regarding sensitivity to issues, for example, language, religion and learning styles. It must be recognised that dealing with diversity is an ongoing process that is not without its challenges.

The shift in the political arena in South Africa post 1994 gives space to examine diversity practices in a democratic society beyond those that emerged in this study. In most cases diversity practices in the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid era remain undisturbed. There is opportunity to draw on political forces, yet teachers have not seized this opportunity on account of their own processes that short circuit and concretize diversity to cultural celebratory practices. The possibility of redefining social relationships in schools allows for the exploration of all kinds of questions that relate more directly to the teachers' responsibility in the learning process. Teachers are to continually ask questions such as, what is my understanding of diversity learning? What is my

understanding of the teaching/learning relationship? How is meaning constructed regarding diversity in the classroom? How is knowledge produced? What is the role of the teacher? These are questions that need to be posed if classrooms are to be sites of contestation as espoused by critical pedagogy. Pedagogy that is intended to be critical in practice always places emphasis on the responsibility of the teachers in the learning process to enhance diversity (Freire, 1987).

Diversity is a relatively new phenomenon in South African education, and certainly an area that warrants further development, particularly in professional and curriculum development. In spite of a substantial body of international research on multicultural education, challenges continue for professional and curriculum development in South Africa in dealing both with the legacy of apartheid and the consequences of change. It should be noted that change is a slow process and although the research is driven by a political agenda, it is not the agenda that resonates with the classroom practice of the teachers in this study. Political change does not necessitate a change in classroom practice, as orientations and attitudes may remain largely unchallenged. The question is, are teachers (with different values, faced with curriculum overload) able to transform their practice to improve the life chances of learners?

There is therefore a need that teachers view what they do in the classroom in a critical manner and that they inculcate into their teaching programmes varied tools that challenge past curriculum practices with theory that will improve the life chances of learners. Teachers have the responsibility, and are in a critical position to dismantle and rearrange the rules and codes that make up classroom reality. The challenge therefore is for teachers in the classroom to recognize undemocratic and oppressive features, and to create an environment that works towards transforming these features. McLaren (1989) poses the question, "how have certain

pedagogical practices become so habitual or natural in school settings that teachers accept them as normal, unproblematic, and expected?" The issue of language is such an example, where despite policy change language is used to keep traditions in place and certain groups out. Another is religion, where if the character of the school is explicitly Christian, learners do not have the option of disassociating themselves on any formal level.

Teachers should be more critical of their practice and re-examine their traditional classroom practice. Space should be created for teachers to change their practice and contest unjust practices, which is a crucial step in translating pedagogical practices. During the discussions it became apparent that the shift in policy does not necessarily reflect congruence with classroom practice; this may in part be due to the different background, values and experience of teachers, as well as curriculum overload experienced by schools in South Africa still faced with many inequalities and imbalances.

8.7.2 Policy Framework

The new education policy framework legislates a philosophy of "education for all" and embraces a curriculum that promotes social justice and inclusivity. Although current policy in South Africa places emphasis on curriculum and professional development of teachers to adequately respond to diverse classroom settings, this remains a challenge at the level of implementation.

The research points to the gap in the way policy has been developed in terms of diversity practices. There is a gap in South African research on the teacher's voice about classroom diversity practices. The methodology used in this study provided teachers with the space to talk about their

interventions, and contributes to building the body of research knowledge. The varied contexts of teaching illuminated that no one-size-fits-all approach can be used in the field of diversity.

The introduction of a unified education system with a new curriculum cannot be expected to put an end to power struggles and to the imbalances that still constitute society. Similarly, the change in government does not automatically lead to liberating practices in society and in the classroom. It requires a willingness of teachers to collaborate, a show of commitment and reflection in an attempt to resolve the problems encountered in practice. The study shows that perceptions do not emerge simply out of a changed political and constitutional context. What is required, is an examination of how policy is being implemented and supported.

8.7.3   Methodology

The study took into account the richness of allowing teachers to talk about their practice, but points to the need for further research on actual classroom situations to enhance and improve classroom practice. As the study did not include classroom observation, the focus was on gathering the views on how teachers construct their understanding of diversity in relation to their context. The research therefore gathered information on teachers talking about diversity practices. It is hoped that, by using the "voices of the teachers" as evidence of their understanding of diversity and their management of diversity in the classroom, this study will add adds to developing both new ideas and strategies for diversity.

The study suggests a conceptualization of diversity cognisant of the teacher who brings her/his own diversity, personal history, knowledge and concerns into a relationship with her/his working reality and environment.

As it is in essence the role of the teacher to mediate processes in the classroom, tension may arise as the two (the position of the teacher and the environment) may be in conflict. An important aspect of teaching is to understand the learning context and background of learners, a requirement that proved to be a challenge in this study.

The experience provided insights into how the background of teachers and the context of teaching influence their understanding of diversity and of classroom management. There was an awareness of the complexities of diversity classroom practices. Given the complexity of the diversity, there remains a need for further investigation to provide more insight into why and how these social, cultural and economic processes occur. This may include a more in-depth investigation of how parents and learners understand the issue of diversity in relation to classroom practice. This will offer some more insight into why and how social processes such as mixing, dominance and conflict occur in schools as social systems.

8.8   FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has explored the question, "How do primary school teachers deal with diversity in the classroom?" in the Cape Peninsula, South Africa. It focused on how teachers understood diversity, on issues of diversity that they confront and on how they deal with diversity in the classroom.

The definitions offered by the participants reflected a very broad and all-encompassing understanding of diversity. However, the interventions of the teachers were mainly based on a multi-cultural celebratory approach to deal with diversity in the classroom. This is mainly demonstrated through the practice of "Let's celebrate our differences". A crucial

question remains, "Are teachers able to deal with diversity in a manner that is different to the celebratory approach?"

Another aspect that could be explored further refers to the relation between the learners' attitude, behaviour, performance and diversity. Although the learners are the main beneficiaries of the school education system, they were not part of the study; and the study is thus unable to ascertain their experiences and what the consequences of diversity would be on learner attitude, behaviour and performance, socially and academically. Furthermore, it will be important to ascertain the development of institutions (which include parents) in relation to diversity and how best to meet the educational challenge of learners' diversity.

A further dilemma is how to sustain the commitment from teachers to develop programmes that will engage the diverse backgrounds and expectations of learners. It is necessary that teachers have relevant conceptual frameworks about issues of diversity and an attitude that is not threatening to, nor threatened by different others (Banks, 1995). The development, training and ability of teachers to deal with diversity are some more concerns.

The research posed challenging research questions for schools in South Africa seeking to expand their boundaries in terms of diversity to ensure that all South African learners are equally affirmed and respected. How prepared and resourced are schools and teachers? How open are teachers to change and how do they effect change? How committed are teachers to a diversity policy? Are polices being implemented?

The concept diversity, when framed within the discourse of multi-culturalism is limiting and uncritical and does not move to address the complexity of a shift from a homogenous setting to the mixing of various

racial, class, and cultural backgrounds. The questions are: Do schools have the capacity to deal with diversity other than through the notion – multiculturalism. Are schools open to diverse language practices? How can the life chances of impoverished communities be improved? How do teachers deal with the consequences of change?

8.9 CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted and reinforced that dealing with diversity is not an easy social process, but an educational process that requires continuous dialogue. It presents a portrait of teachers trying to find a balance between policy expectations and daily classroom experiences.

This study argues for an approach to diversity that is open to the many complex forms of diversity and that diversity be seen as an opportunity to recognise and respect differences and address the imbalances of power as these play out in the classroom in terms of - amongst others - race, language and religion.

The assumption that political change informs classroom practice is not a given as there are a variety of factors at play. The shifts from traditional practices to a social justice agenda that may not be congruent with the professional interest of the teachers are all forces that impact on practice. The caring role of the teacher and a celebratory approach to religious and cultural differences appear to be the most comfortable approaches for educators to assume. The gap between the constitutional mandate, educational policy and social reality continues to be wide, and the challenge is to bring together the constructs/conceptions that inform the practices to reflect social transition.

The challenge is to recognise that teaching is complex and multifaceted. Dealing with diversity is more than employing a celebratory approach as the strategy on its own neglects to address the inequitable realities of schools and the classroom. In addition, a fascination with cultural differences, ethnicity and traditions does not solve differences; it could further entrench them.

South Africa is divided by the burdens of its historical legacy where one section of society was oppressed and exploited by the other. The consequence of its history is seen in the social manifestation of diversity in a context of inequality. This makes it necessary to address issues of diversity with the aim of building a society that transcends divisions, supported by the constitution of South Africa. The mandate enshrined in the constitution of South Africa is to see how successful diversity management has been, reinforced by educational policy to address issues of social justice. The terrain of policy needs to understand whether existing strategies are implementable and what unintended consequences may be arising.

From a research perspective, one needs to understand the South African diversity experience in comparative terms, and the lessons that it offers for both theory building and classroom practice. Literature was mainly drawn from other countries such as the USA and UK which imparted similar trends as experienced by the demographically diverse teachers who participated in this study.

Dealing with diversity is of course not a peculiarly South African concern; it is an issue relevant to much of the world. However, it is a debate that has become all the more urgent in South Africa, given the post-apartheid shift in ideology and policy. Personally the research offered me some

insight into the complexities of investigating school diversity and into the varied issues that confront schools and teachers.

Through addressing the diversity issue, the focus remains to empower, politically and economically, those South African citizens that have been historically excluded as a result of apartheid. A challenge now for education in South Africa is to deal with the consequence of political change, specifically the issue of diversity in schools. This thesis has expressed the need to ensure redress, promote the political and socio-economic recognition of those who were historically excluded, yet be aware of the challenges in dealing with the varied levels of diversity in South African schools.

Despite the many policies in South Africa related to respect for diversity, the study revealed that mainly individual rather than institutional interventions informed classroom diversity planning. It is hoped that the experiences of the teachers will find expression in the classrooms and contribute to the ongoing debate and further research on teaching within the rich diversity in South African schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: QUESTIONNAIRE
Dealing with Diversity in the classroom. Teachers' Perspective

Name:

School:

Home Address:

Telephone Number:

Cell Number:

Language:

Questionnaire

"Many policies have been formulated regarding equal opportunities for all regardless of differences in background and characteristics in South Africa. The Constitution, (1996) is the foundation of the legal framework and provides the basis for curriculum transformation, curriculum development and classroom management."

1.   Write in your own words, what you understand by the concept diversity.
2.   In question 1, you expressed what you understand by diversity. What influenced your thoughts that you have expressed?

'Schools and classrooms are faced with diversity issues"

3.   What kind of issues does your school have to deal with?
4.   How do you in your classroom deal with the issues of diversity? Give actual examples of practice.

"Since 1990, schools and classrooms have become more diverse, expecting teachers to adjust to the educational changes"

5.   Do you feel positive or negative about these changes in SA Education? Please explain your answer.

6.   How do you feel about the changes that you have had to implement in your own class room and school? Please explain your answer.

Thanks for taking the time to complete the Questionnaire!

Appendix B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule

1.   Explain the purpose of the interview, which is to ascertain the teachers understanding of diversity and how they deal with it in the classroom.

Biographical Information:

2.   Age of teacher:
3.   Language of preference?
4.   Other languages?
5.   School at which you teach?
6.   Where did you do your teacher training and what year did you qualify?

Diversity Questions:

7.   Please share with me your understanding of diversity.
8.   What has informed your understanding (of diversity)?
9.   Share with me some of the issues pertaining to diversity that you have to deal with in your classroom/school.
10.   How have you intervened around these issues?   And, why have you intervened in this way?
11.   What are your personal views on the issues you have just mentioned (their own interpretation e.g., to religion, race, gender, etc.)

Lesson Planning:

12.   Given some of the diversity issues we have just discussed, does it affect how you plan your lessons?   If yes, how?
13.   Have the curriculum policies been helpful?
14.   How do you feel about the curriculum policies (given its focus on social justice)? Explain.
15.   If you could request additional resources to assist your interventions with diversity – what would it be?

School environment factors:

16.   What factors in your school impact on the way you deal with these issues?,

17.   Are there any other related issues that you would like to discuss or share with me?

Thank you.

Appendix C: Letter from Western Cape Education Department.

Navrae / Enquiries / Imibuzo: Dr RS Cornelissen
Telefoon / Telephone / IFoni: (021) 467-2286
Faks / Fax / IFeksi(021) 425-7445
Verwysing / Reference / ISalathiso: 20070608-0052

Mr Wayne Alexander
9 Prieska Road
SYBRAND PARK
7700

Dear Mr W. Alexander

Research Proposal: Dealing with Diversity: Teachers' perspective.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.

The Study is to be conducted from 16thJuly 2007 to 30th October 2007.
No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2007).

Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.

A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.

Your research will be limited to the list of schools as submitted to the Western Cape Education Department.

A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Education Research
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen

for: HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 16th July 2007

Appendix D: **Interview Transcription**

Apendix D Interview excerpt
An example of an interview excerpt – January 2006.

Please share with me your understanding of diversity.
My understanding is the different kinds of backgrounds and influences you were subjected to as a human being and how that has impacted on your life. Whether it be your belief system, your cultural background, your upbringing and environment, whether it is your income group that you are placed in a way you will have a different perspective of life. Your upbringing is going to enhanced or impacted negatively by your environment and obviously the teaching that your school education institution is going to impart.

What has informed your understanding of diversity?
I have interacted with many learners, and children are children but come with baggage. The child has his perception of the world because of where he comes from. My experiences are that the children that come from different backgrounds don't gel. They are in the same peer groups and play together, but the conflict is in them, difficult for me to handle. This is so even within the same economic background, class structure.
The conflict is so bad that I physically have to separate the children. We also have the racial diversity because of apartheid. I teach in a coloured township with different perceptions of the ANC, DA and Nats. [political parties]
It is evident that the parents have influenced their children in a certain manner, and children not accommodative of other groups.
As a Muslim woman, it has not been easy. I attended where no specific religion was practised, encouraged by critical teachers but now exposed to a range of faiths. I sometimes feel ostracised because of my position I take.

What are your personal views on the issues you have just mentioned?
On the issue of the religion I would say that if we take the universal morals and just implement that to a heterogeneous group. I know what we're exposed to, now is the best thing to do because in my class also girls wants to wear a scarf because I am a Muslim and I'm wearing a scarf, which can't be. I don't want to give them that kind of role model,

Social / environmental background

Culture

Class/ Socio-economic status

Perceptions/ Stereotypes

Conflict

Race Politics

Role Models

Exclusion

Religion

Respect

Social

Gender

Language

Learning needs/ abilities/style

Resources and Policies

you must respect the person but you don't have to follow what they are doing. It's a life skill they have to learn to use adequately because they can so easily follow the wrong person also. And also if you are to pray, the Our Father or whatever it is that you're going to be pray, one should not be marginalising somebody else. It doesn't matter what you believe. Because there are black children in my class who are Seventh Day Adventist and there are others who belong to a staunch Catholic Church and then those other Protestant churches where they sing and clap. I tell them to just pray to their own God, I think it makes a lot more sense. I just give a minute of silence, because the one thing we can't do is neglect the child's spirituality and because that is traditional. Some children have only that to hang on to. So that question of religion I think we must just make it universal. About the race, that's a difficult one because they have been isolated for so long. It is a problem. And of course in the coloured community it is very much a bigger problem, because they're not really exposed to white people but if for example a white person comes onto the premises then it's almost like there is a kind of respect and a oohaah, you know. And it's sickening, it sickens you and of course their parents are like that so the race issue I think is deeply entrenched. Maybe 50 years from now when you and I are six foot under the ground we might not see it. Although I must say at our school we have a lot acceptance from the other side. You know we teach a road away from each other and our school populations are so different. So it is also our principal, she works with street children and in the informal settlements as a women's league person. So that is why we have that diverse school population. But it is still that race issue I don't know how we're going to actually ever overcome it right now in the school. Other than constantly preaching respect each other, mutual respect and I must say it can happen, it depends on you and how you facilitate that whole story in your classroom. I had a little boy Timothy who looks like a white boy and he was very tall and his best friend was Litha, a little black boy and the two of them used to change bread and Timothy's mother would have died a thousand times if she had to know that he was eating from Litha but Timothy saw nothing wrong. So maybe our children are going to be colourblind eventually and the little bit that's

Social / environmental background

Culture

Class/ Socio-economic status

Perceptions/ Stereotypes

Conflict

Race Politics

Role Models

Exclusion

Religion

Respect

Social

Gender

Language

Learning needs/ abilities/style

Resources and Policies

is hopeful. It's, I think the contamination from the parents that influenced the children so badly. There's not much gender diversity because in a co-ed school a girl is a girl. We try to tell them to respect a girl's body yes and all of that which is brought to the fore with HIV education you know but girls must also be given the opportunity to become the president because once again from different cultures male dominance is their culture. And you can see that maybe in that home the father is the leading figure and so that boy comes to school with that attitude. And when comes through, that it is that type of attitude that is born and bred in the home to address it adequately.

Our school is an English school, and only about 5% really speak English at home. This I can see from out literacy levels. They don't read, not exposed to proper English. And also being in an English class is perceived to make you a better person. The parents don't want their children to be in an Afrikaans class. This is making things difficult, as the children are not being taught in their mother tongue. So if we accommodate Afrikaans we can also accommodate the Xhosa speaking child. In fact we find that the Xhosa speaking child learn English faster and better that the Afrikaans speaking child, because the Xhosa child makes an effort. This all depends on the attitude of the parents. And there again the class structure comes through and all of that. The people's economic backgrounds and intellect. Some parents have not been schooled. They sometimes don't understand a word you are saying, but they wish for the child to become a doctor, even though the child doesn't have the inclination. The child's role model is sometimes the taxi driver. They exposed to this reality in their community. I'm fighting for them to think out of the box but a losing battle. They don't want to become teachers. They are not exposed, and their reality is their immediate surroundings, impacting on their development and confidence.

Given some of the diversity issues we have discussed, does it affect how you plan your lesson?
I include life skills programmes that include diversity. I'm a grade two teacher so my projects would include dressing

Social / environmental background

Culture

Class/ Socio-economic status

Perceptions/ Stereotypes

Conflict

Race Politics

Role Models

Exclusion

Religion

Respect

Social

Gender

Language

Learning needs/ abilities/style

Resources and Policies

up a doll in different cultural clothing. We show dolls from different countries to show uniqueness. The knowledge came through people based on questions, which the parents with their children had to do. This included what language do they speak, what do you call their dress code and why do they dress like that. It is important to instill a healthy attitude because of the negative attitude that comes through for being different.

Inclusivity also comes to mind because of my boy in the class who has brain damage. Not an easy situation, but I must say because of my attitude towards Dillon being, needing to go to a cerebral palsy institution. The rest of the class have sort of adopted him, you know, so if he cannot pick up his case, that day if his muscle tone is low or if he cannot touch… there will be three or four little boys if he cannot pick up his case, for him. Sometimes he takes advantage, because then he suddenly can't write and everybody wants to write for Dillon. But that is directly because of my attitude towards Dillon. So I could have had this attitude that you're not supposed to be here and I'm not going to really include you. Besides the fact that he is an absolute marshmallow of a child, you know and you want to eat him up. Besides that he cannot cope with the workload, it's my attitude too that has changed everybody else's attitude. Similarly with the black children I let them sing Nkosi Sikelele they do the Xhosa part and the others must follow suit. So immediately they have this patriotism coming to the fore which I could never have, quite frankly, and which I don't get from the other race groups so yes I think my approach is little more intense than the other educators because of the exposure that I have had, but I'm sure that, you know, there must just be a workshop from the department to give the educators a little bit of guidance of how to do it and not to tell them to go work out lessons, to actually demonstrate to them this is basically how it's done and where we're coming from. That we then tell the child and lead by example. That is what you need to do. That it doesn't matter, you look past the person's skin, you look past the person's ability like in Dillon's case, everybody looks past his disability. He is a darling child. It's not easy, I must admit, it is very difficult but it can happen.

Social / environmental background

Culture

Class/ Socio-economic status

Perceptions/ Stereotypes

Conflict

Race Politics

Role Models

Exclusion

Religion

Respect

Social

Gender
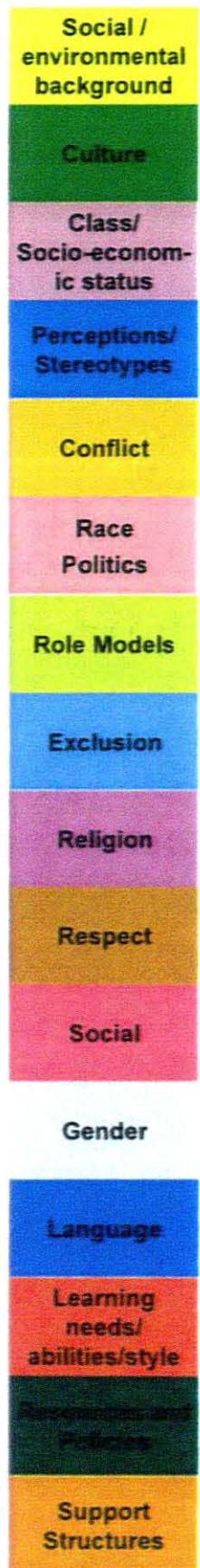
Language

Learning needs/ abilities/style

Resources and Policies

Have the curriculum policies been helpful?

The training is never enough. The training can never be old. It doesn't matter how old you are, it's a life-long learning experience in any effect. But policy is for me a total abstract in terms of when you get into that classroom, because if you have a policy you must have a modus operandi on how to implement it and there is a gap between policy and implementing policy in the whole country. Not just in education because we have the most marvelous constitution as South Africans but the implementation of that has yet to be seen. So the policies that the department keeps sending us I think somebody is just doing their jobs to get it to us just and they can say yes we have them. But we do have an HIV policy, you know, what I'm saying kind of thing and the one policy that our school attempted was the language policy. That when you admit your child and the child does not come from an English background that you agree that only when the child can speak the language that we now can allow the child to proceed to the next grade which wasn't a mechanism to prevent learners of other languages to proceed to the next grade or to prevent us from promoting them. But that we based it on the actual fact that it takes a learner 18 months to be eloquent in a third or a second language and if the learner came from a Xhosa speaking background especially, he would only really be able to speak it. He can understand it yet but he can't speak it. And how can you speak, not speak English. How can you learn to read, how will you write. So it was actually a black subject advisor who recommended that we do that... have a language policy. But now we're coming to a cul de sac because now the department says you must have intervention before the child can remain in the same grade. You need to go through that whole process of what interventions you did and that. And so now the teacher is faced with this huge mammoth task of how she's going to prove that the only reason for that child to remain behind is for his own benefit, is for him to just master the language and so our language policy has fallen on its face. So that, I mean policies really mean very little if we cannot implement it.

Legend (colour blocks):

- Social / environmental background
- Culture
- Class/ Socio-econom- ic status
- Perceptions/ Stereotypes
- Conflict
- Race Politics
- Role Models
- Exclusion
- Religion
- Respect
- Social
- Gender
- Language
- Learning needs/ abilities/style
- Resources and Policies

School Environment Factors

What factors in your school impact on the way you deal with these issues?

So yes we have a principal who will go to the shebeen and go take a learner out and that is the reason our school is the way, the dynamics of our school. It also got a lot of other things to deal with the politics and the dynamics of our staff. It's never going to be idealistic we had our own xxx and that and that. But when it comes to our school and staff grouping together the teachers, we make a decision and with a mind to uplift a mother who's perhaps in a situation where the father raped the children. We empowered her by giving her the leeway to come and tell at the school to empower her and then the teachers could help her by getting a lawyer and things like that. So the school has in many ways been a supportive structure and it then becomes a mutual agreement. You give and you meet us half way and we give and that kind of thing.

I'm really want to talk about more ways… Listen, I want to end off now that our school has linked up with a church group and we have about three churches using our classrooms after school hours. So we had a number of programmes that we ran with them and although with the churches I spearheaded a lot of those programmes the pastor would then come on a Monday and we would have an assembly where they clap and they sing. You know, I mean, Muslims, Christians, Xhosa-speaking whatever, they enjoyed it because of the guitar, the music and all of that. And then at the end of the day the pastor would give a moral story to the whole school. Then we also had a programme called Voices and Choices. Where it was, the target group was Grade 6 learners where we preached abstinence to the Grade 6 learners and I mean that was right at the bridging… that is where they become sexually active and the teachers left the room. It was a group of young people who once again couldn't find employment and the pastor came in and they did it through doll play and video tapes. That was very successful because I think a lot of those children…. But then when the church … for what it's worth anything is going to help at this point now, for our learners to just get some positive input into their kind of lives. The other programme that we did is that we have our

Social / environmental background

Culture

Class/ Socio-economic status

Perceptions/ Stereotypes

Conflict

Race Politics

Role Models

Exclusion

Religion

Respect

Social

Gender

Language

Learning needs/ abilities/style

Support Structures

~~volunteer parents coming in and doing our playground~~
~~duties.~~ We also have parents doing scholar patrol duty and by interacting with the learners the parents see our plight. They...some parents don't want to come back the next day because it is so horrific to go into a room with 40 learners and to discipline them. And those are the parents that will stand up in a parents meeting and speak in favour of the teacher because a lot of parents think they can run to the department every time you know.

Are there any other related issues:
Can I just say something, You know we had two rasta persons at our school and we actually asked these parents to come in because we couldn't understand the braids and the cap that they wear. And now I think we have a better understanding so we do draw on the community a lot to understand.

Social / environmental background

Culture

Class/ Socio-economic status

Perceptions/ Stereotypes

Conflict

Race Politics

Role Models

Exclusion

Religion

Respect

Social

Gender

Language

Abilities

Resources and Policies

Teachers' understandings of diversity

Table 5.1:   Teachers' understandings of the concept – diversity

CATEGORY	CODES
Race	• Race • Racial conflict • Race hierarchy • Racial stereotypes/prejudice • Prefer the "white teacher" • Group and interact according to race
Economic Difference	• Income • Economic background • Matter of economics • Poor children • Unable to pay fees • Money for outings • Fund-raising efforts,
Culture	• Different cultures • Cultural backgrounds • Sub-cultures • Celebration of different cultures
Religion	• Different religions • Dominance of religions • Moral values • Different belief systems • African religious beliefs • Colonial religions
Language	• Different languages • Language abilities • Mother tongue • English as main language • Language of learning • Learning additional languages • Language policies
Social	• Environment • Different backgrounds • Upbringing • Own perspectives • Diverse backgrounds • Social activities • Social conflict • Political influence • Role models • Respect for the other • Attitude of teacher

	• Attitude of parent • Social backgrounds
Learning Skills	• Different learning skills • Career aspirations • Physically challenged learners • Intellectually challenged learners • Different teaching styles • Plan so that all can achieve • Use a range of assessment methods • Aware that parents unable to support
Gender	• Gender issues • Male Dominance • Patriarchy • Different games for girls and boys
Physiological	• Physical features and differences • Physical activity • Sport activities • Jumping and running – improve co-ordination
Equal Opportunity	• Respect for others • Inclusion policy • Accommodate all learners • Access to education • Quality education for all • Diverse opportunities • Feeling marginalised • Exposure to learning • Supporting the other • Diversity guidance • Social justice education • Rights of learners and education
Stereotypes/Perceptions	• Their culture makes them stick together • Coloureds are more like whites • Blacks choose not to fit in • Blacks have learning problems
Conflict	• Miscommunication leads to conflict • Traditional opinions • Racial conflict • English and Afrikaans tension • Physical differences • Social class
Respect	• Showing respect for others • Respecting the rights of others

Table 5.2: Influences on teachers' understanding of diversity

CATEGORY	CODE
Role model	• Teachers • Parents • Political leaders • Community leaders
History	• Education transformation in SA • Political changes • Social changes • Apartheid education • Economic background • Political influences • Assimilation processes • Knowledge of Constitution
Personal Experience	• Educational training • Social environment and upbringing • Political involvement • Social conflict • Personal philosophy • Social activities

Table 5.3: Diversity issues at school/classroom

CATEGORY	CODES
Race	• Apartheid history • Race issues • Political influences • Ethnicity • Different races • Racial prejudice
Economic	• Poverty • Payment of school fees • Unemployment • State grants • Economic barriers • Limited finances • Affordability and access • Single parenting – single salary
Culture	• Conflict of traditions • Cultural beliefs
Religion	• Different religions • Many religious festivals • Christianity still dominates
Language	• Language and communication • Multilingualism • Mother tongue
Social	• Social issues • Dysfunctional homes • Gangsterism • Violence and abuse • Health issues, HIV/AIDS and nutrition • Ill-disciplined learners • Disrespectful children • Social class • Gender stereotypes • Patriarchal society • Male dominance • Different social backgrounds • Different role models
Learning Styles	• Unable to cater for all learners • Learning and physical disabilities • Slow learners • Classification and grouping of learners • Different modalities • Learn differently

Gender	• Mixing the gender groups
	• Playing different games
Physiological	• Different physical features
	• Physical abilities
	• Long and short hair
	• Skin pigmentation
Stereotypes/Perceptions	• Xhosa culture, speak loudly
	• Certain groups like to group together
	• Whites have accents
Conflict	• Forms of miscommunication
	• Racial tension
	• Offer conflict resolution
Resources	• Lack of infrastructure
	• Lack equipment and material
	• Large classes
	• Broken facilities
	• Sandy playgrounds

Table 5.4: Diversity management in the classroom.

CATEGORY	CODE
Multiculturalism	• Multi-cultural lessons • Understanding of different cultural codes • Recognition of all spoken languages • Celebrating of festivals • Sharing of cultural rituals and traditions • Heritage celebration • Respect for diversity stories
Social Activities	• Play sport • Involve in life skills – personal development • Conflict resolution activities • Communication skills • Caring about the other • Different games and recreation activities • Personal development and health living • Patriotism
Learning and Teaching Styles	• Differentiated groups • Ability groups • Concrete to abstract teaching • Peer teaching • Recognition of individual needs • Differentiated teaching • Different intelligences • Different modalities • Supporting and respecting others • Know strengths and weaknesses • Barriers to Learning • Teaching volunteers • Parental support • Qualifications and training of teachers

Table 5.5: Resources needed

CATEGORY	CODE
Financial Resources	- Lack of school funding - Limited funding from department - Unable to afford books - Low school fees - Unable to purchase equipment - Financial constraints - Income from school fees - Fund-raising efforts - Poor communities
Technical Resources	- Poor school infrastructure - Not enough classrooms - No hall and resource centre - Lack of IT equipment and facilities - Good facilities - No library - Lack sport fields
Human Resources	- Smaller class sizes - Better teacher-pupil ratio - More teachers - Teacher assistants - Support staff - Better training of teachers - School Governing Body training - Diversity management - Training to deal with diversity - Access to counselling staff
Material Resources	- Text books for teaching - Programmes to assist teaching - Additional teaching resources - Material to help make sense of policies - Able to purchase Learning and Teaching Support Material - Classroom diversity programmes

Appendix F: Focus Group Discussion Summary Table

Table 5.1:   Teachers' understandings of the concept – diversity

CATEGORY	CODES
Race	• Race classification • Racists remarks • Racial prejudice • Racists baggage of parents
Economic Difference	• Socio-economic differences • Shacks for dwellings • Poverty • State grants • Rely on pension • Lack of food
Culture	• Different cultures • Knowing one another's culture • Respecting other culture
Religion	• Different faiths • Christian, Moslem, Jewish, Hindus • Diverse moral values • Many belief systems
Language	• Different languages • Foreign language learners • Mother tongue instruction • English as more important
Social	• Diverse environments • Different backgrounds • Upbringing • Social backgrounds • Different areas and communities • Home stimulation • Safe environment • Emotional well-being • Different people's children • Knowing the children's circumstances • Socially deprived children • Lack of social skills • Different geographical areas • Single parenting • Same sex partners • Live with grandparents • Interracial relationships • Abused children

Learning Skills	- Different ability groups - Accommodate the potential of all learners - Different abilities of teachers - Physically challenged learners - Intellectually challenged learners - Different teaching styles - Different teaching preferences
Gender	- Different interests of boys and girls - Physical abilities - Working styles - Presentation of work - Sexual orientation
Physiological	- Physical activity - Different games – interaction
Equal Opportunity	- Respect for others - Inclusion of all learners - Accommodate all learners - Access to opportunities - Acknowledge abilities of learners - Know background of learners - Interact in respectful manner

Table 5.2: Influences on teachers' understanding of diversity

CATEGORY	CODE
Role model	• Leadership ay schools • Committed teachers • Political activists • Community leaders • Religious leaders • Activists siblings and friends
History	• Historical factors within South Africa • Apartheid • Group Areas Act • Not able to play where wanted • Classified as "coloured"
Personal Experience	• Involved in political activities • Forcibly removed from dwelling • Status linked to where grew up • Accommodated based on learning abilities • Embraced because of physical features • The divide between the English and the Afrikaans class • Socialising with other groups

Table 5.3: Diversity issues at school/classroom

CATEGORY	CODES
Race	• Racial conflict • Racial classification • Racial attitude of parents • Racists comments of learners • Racial stereotyping
Economic	• Poverty • Payment of school fees • Unemployment • State grants • Economic barriers • Limited finances • Affordability and access • Single parenting – single salary
Culture	• Conflict of traditions and moral values • Cultural beliefs • Different belief system
Religion	• Different religions • Multi-faith approach • Christianity still strong • Offer moral stories
Language	• Language and communication • Multilingualism a challenge • Mother tongue instruction • Bi-lingualism
Social	• Unhealthy living • Violence at schools • Drug abuse • Alcohol abuse • Abuse of children and women • HIV/AIDS • Lack of social skills • Dysfunctional homes • Lack of food • Poor nutrition status • Poor hygiene • School burglaries • Not part of sport organisations • Parents unable to support children • Home visits • Home conditions • Attitude of teachers/parents/learners • Different social backgrounds • Different role models

Learning Styles	• Unable to cater for all learners • Learning and physical disabilities • Learning styles • Classification and grouping of learners • Different teaching methods • Different modalities • Learn differently
Gender	• More girls in class • Girls tend to focus • Boys will be boys
Resources	• Lack of infrastructure • Lack equipment and material • Large classes • Broken facilities • Poor state of buildings • Sandy playgrounds • Limited security systems • No school hall • Lack of adequate facilities • No libraries • Lack of sport fields

Table 5.4: Diversity management in the classroom.

CATEGORY	CODE
Multiculturalism	• Celebratory approach • Multi-lingualism • Allow to talk in mother tongue • Share moral stories • Talk about different religions and festivals • Life skills and knowing oneself • Respecting other activities • Anti-racist activities
Social Activities	• Play games and sport to encourage interactions • Introduce different social clubs • Events for parents • Life skill programmes • Citizenship programmes
Learning and Teaching Styles	• Knowing the child • Context of learning and teaching • Responsible and sensitive teaching approaches • Safe, stimulated environment • Collaborative planning • Group work • Individual teaching and work • Accommodate all to ensure success • Differentiated groups • Recognition of individual needs • Differentiated teaching • Different intelligences • Different modalities • Use of games • Different assessment methods • Adherence to policy • Systemic thinking • Support for dealing with diversity • Lack of resources

Table 5.5: Resources needed

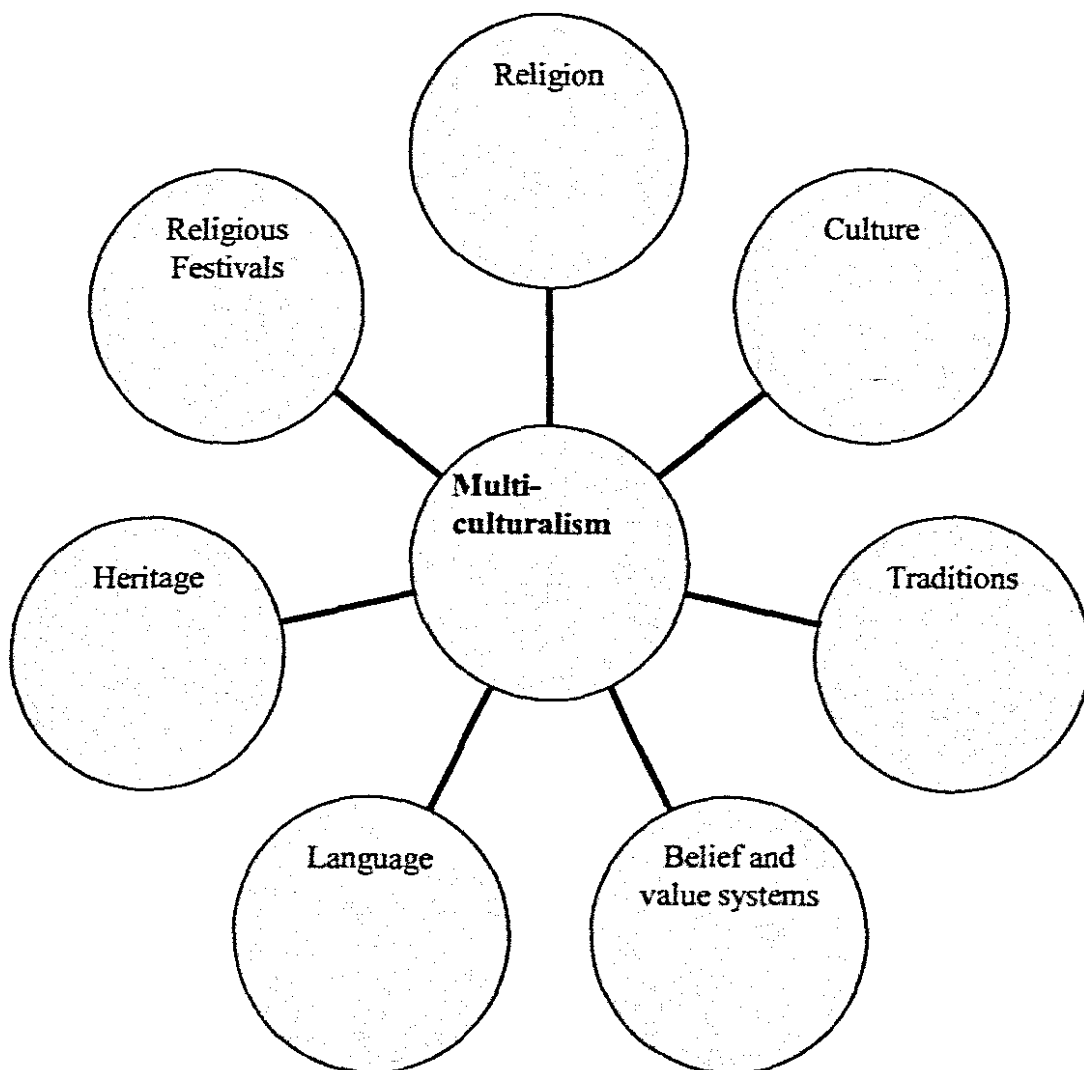| CATEGORY	CODE
Financial Resources	• Lack of school funding • Limited funding from department • Unable to afford books • Low school fees • Unable to purchase equipment • Financial constraints • Income from school fees • Fund-raising efforts • Poor communities/Rich communities • Able to afford different support
Technical Resources	• Poor school infrastructure • Not enough classrooms • No hall and resource centre • Lack of IT equipment and facilities • Good facilities • No library • Lack sport fields
Human Resources	• Large class sizes • Smaller class sizes • Better teacher-pupil ratio • More teachers • Teacher assistants • Support staff, therapists • Inadequate training of teachers • Afford SGB staff • Better training of teachers • School Governing Body training • Diversity management training • Training to deal with diversity • Access to counselling staff
Material Resources	• Text books for teaching • Programmes to assist teaching • Additional teaching resources • Material to help make sense of policies • Policy documents better mediated • Able to purchase Learning and Teaching Support Material • Classroom diversity programmes

Appendix G: Summary set of codes and categories related to both research questions

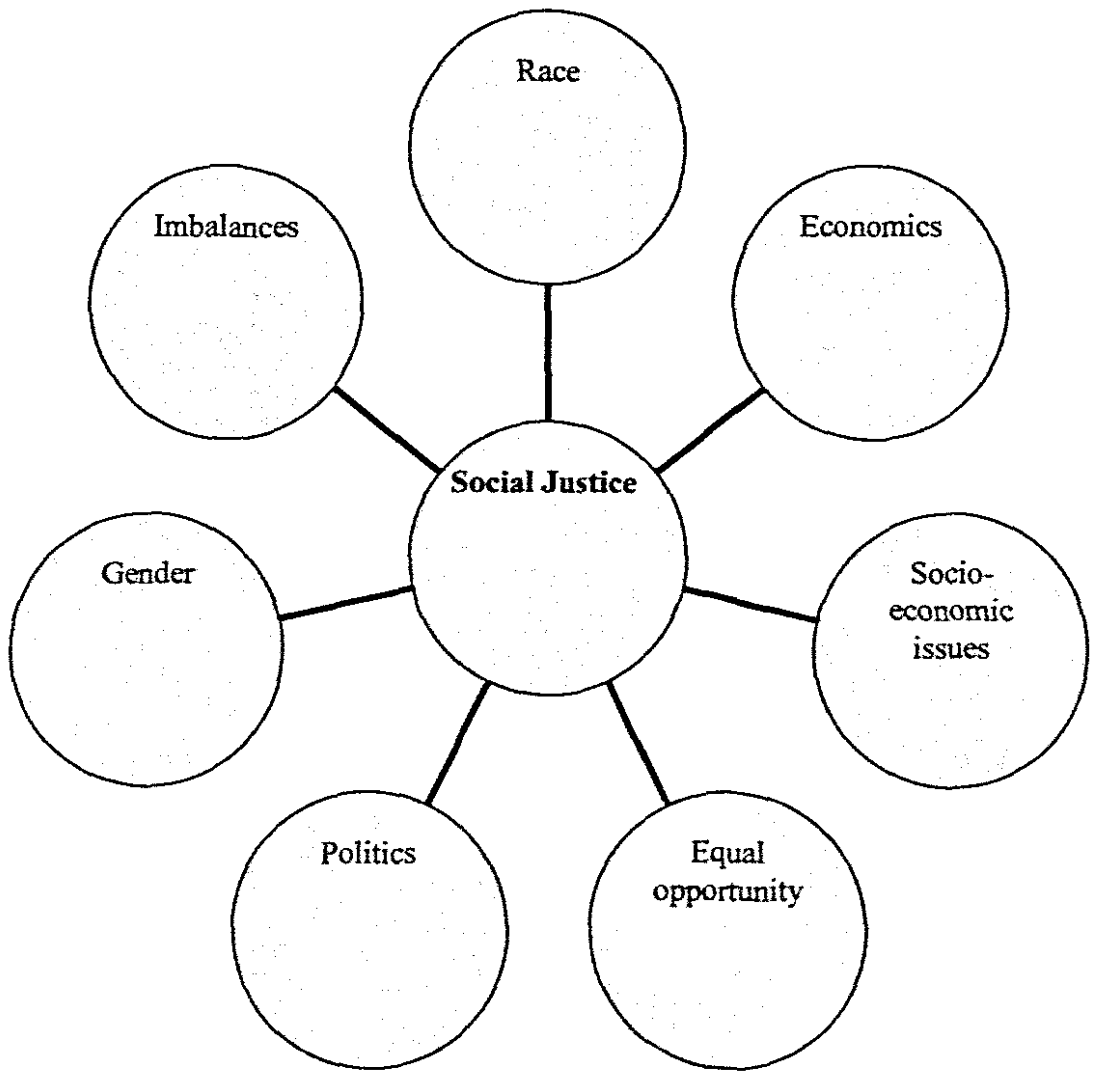| Codes	Categories
Poverty, unemployment, income, class, school fees, state grants, affordability, single parent income, affluent community, financial problems	Socio-economic status
Different backgrounds, different environments, social problems, violence, different abuse, hunger, lack of proper nutrition, different illnesses, HIV/AIDS	Social environment
Traditions, customs, beliefs and values, cultural experiences	Culture
Coloured, Black, White, Indian, racial conflict, racial prejudice/stereotypes, racist remarks, racists attitudes,	Race
Moslem, Christianity, Hindu, Jewish, diverse religions, multi-faith, Religion studies, Catholicism and Evangelical, Halaal practices, attend church, mosque, religious festivals	Religion
English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, foreign language, Multi-lingualism, mother tongue, language instruction, Dominance of English language, lack of communication, miscommunication	Language
Intellectual skills, emotional state, learning styles, different intelligences, slow learners, teaching methodologies, different modalities, pedagogical knowledge, group planning individual learning, group learning, teaching skills, diversity training, different assessment styles	Learning styles
Showing respect for others, care and passion, all to have opportunities, respecting abilities, respecting the physiological, understand cultures, generalisations and stereotyping	Respecting others

Appendix H: Frequency analysis of categories

Categories	Number of times used
Socio-economic status	39
Social/Health issues	33
Culture	31
Religion	29
Race	27
Language	26
Learning styles	24
Gender issues	21
Respecting others	14
Background	11
Environment	8
Beliefs and values	8
Age	7
Upbringing	7
Physiological	7

Appendix I: **Example of Mapping process**

Social Justice diagram with central "Social Justice" circle connected to: Race, Economics, Socio-economic issues, Equal opportunity, Politics, Gender, Imbalances

Emotional state

Learning abilities

Different intelligences

Learning Styles

Different modalities

Assessment styles

Teaching methodologies