THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS IN A PARTICULAR MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT.

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Assignment submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
(LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION)

at the
University of Stellenbosch
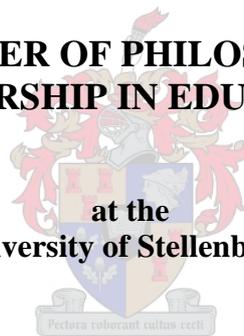
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December 2004

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and had not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any other university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

This study is set at a school where the population of a formerly Afrikaans medium school has radically changed as a result of new education policies in South Africa. An immediate consequence is that English is now used as a parallel LoLT.

This research sets out to recount and interpret the lived experience of five teachers in responding to the challenges of teaching in a multilingual classroom. First selected literature on multilingualism and multiculturalism, both pre-set and inset teacher preparation for such contexts, and language policy in education in South Africa are reviewed. The case study uses structured interviews and classroom observation to generate data. A broadly narrative mode is used in exploring and analysing the data.

The experiences of the five teachers varied greatly. Important factors in colouring their experience are the degree of facility (or otherwise) in using languages other than their mother tongue to mediate learning, their beliefs on teaching, and their openness or bias towards particular cultural groups. All of them felt that they would have benefited from specific training or development in teaching in a multilingual/multicultural environment.

In the final chapter the argument is presented that teachers need support to develop and enhance their teaching strategies. Ideally pre-service teacher education courses should reflect the demographics of South Africa. At the very least all pre-service courses should include a module on multilingualism and offer the knowledge and skills necessary for successful teaching in the new South Africa. In-service courses should also create opportunities for teachers to develop dynamic ways of meeting the challenges they face in the multilingual classroom.

ABSTRAK

Vir hierdie studie is 'n voormalige Afrikaansmediumskool gebruik waarvan die skoolbevolking radikaal verander het as gevolg van die nuwe onderwysbeleid in Suid-Afrika. 'n Onmiddellike gevolg was dat Engels nou as 'n parallelle taal vir onderrig en leer gebruik word.

Die navorsing handel oor en interpreteer die werklike ervarings van vyf onderwysers in reaksie op die uitdagings om in 'n multitalige klas onderwys te gee. Eerstens word geselekteerde literatuur oor multitaligheid en multikuturaliteit, die voorbereiding van sowel voordiens- as indiensopleiding van onderwysers vir sodanige kontekste en taalbeleid in die onderwys in Suid-Afrika bespreek. Vir die gevallestudie is gestruktureerde onderhoude en klaskamerwaarneming gebruik om data te genereer. 'n Breë narratiewe modus is gebruik on die data te ondersoek en ontleed.

Die ondervindings van die vyf onderwysers het baie verskil. Belangrike faktore wat 'n invloed gehad het op hulle ervarings is die mate van bekwaamheid ten opsigte van hulle gebruik van tale wat nie hulle moedertaal is nie om leer te medieer, hulle seining oor die onderwys, en hulle openhartigheid of vooroordeel teenoor bepaalde kulturele groepe. Almal het gevoel dat hulle sou gebaat het by spesifieke opleiding of ontwikkeling ten opsigte van onderrig in 'n multitalige of multikulturele omgewing.

In die laaste hoofstuk word dit gestel dat onderwysers ondersteuning benodig om hulle onderrigstrategieë te ontwikkel en te versterk. Ideaalgesproke behoort onderwyseropleidingsprogramme die demografie van Suid-Afrika te reflekteer. Alle onderwyseropleidingsprogramme behoort ten minste 'n module oor multitaligheid in te sluit en die kennis en vaardighede aan te bied wat benodig word om 'n suksesvolle onderwyser in die nuwe Suid-Afrika te wees. Indiensopleiding behoort ook geleenthede te skep vir onderwysers om dinamiese werkswyses te ontwikkel om die uitdagings wat hulle in die multitalige klas gaan teëkom te hanteer.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this mini-dissertation to my wife Pauline, Tyese (daughter), Montel (son) and a friend (Ivan Jeffrey Bezuidenhout) who tragically lost his life during the Ellis Park stampede on 11 April 2001.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
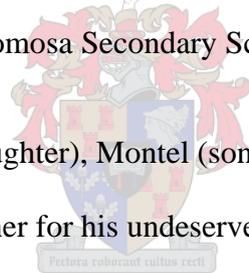
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LoLT   Language of learning and instruction

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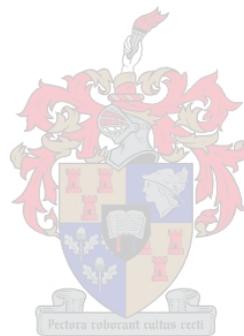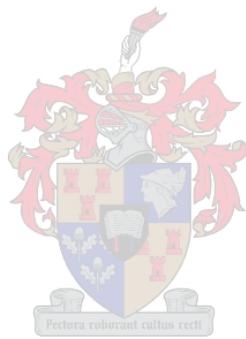
CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

The education system has changed; it is no more the privilege of an elite group but is now open to all the children of our country. How to achieve high standards of education in these circumstances is a personal and social challenge that needs creative thought and determination from teachers (Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Farrell, & Jesson, 1999).

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism in South Africa is set against a historical backdrop of negative attitudes towards African languages, which according to Patel, Sebogodi, van Zyl & Mogapi (1996:16) resulted from the Bantu education system. Much of the anger felt by teachers and students about Bantu education arose from their perception that their education had no value (Martin, 2002: 6).

After continuous pressure from politicians, here and abroad, economists, students, learners, unions, departments and the international community, the government of the time was obliged to release Nelson Mandela and other political leaders and make the transition to a more democratic government.

The first democratic election of our country in 1994 led to dramatic changes in the education of this country (Martin, 1997:6). According to Patel *et al* (1996:87) from that point on, all people regardless of race, culture, creed, economic status or innate potential, could expect to receive educational opportunities that would lead to the optimal development of their individual abilities. The Constitution, according to Martin (2001:8), the supreme law of the country, enshrines this notion. As a consequence, schools explicitly serve varied religious, cultural and socio-economic communities, unlike the past (Martin, 2001:8).

The number of learners entering public schools with limited knowledge of Afrikaans and English has been rising substantially for some time (Krige, Dove, Makalima & Scott, cited in Chick, 1996:2). Many teachers who have not been trained to work with learners who speak

a language other than Afrikaans or English are being asked to provide instruction for these learners (Martin, 1997:11). According to Debora Byrnes (1997:637), there are not enough teachers who speak the home languages or mother tongues of the learners at a sufficiently proficient level to facilitate learning in these languages.

Another factor that should be taken into consideration is the fact that African languages have not yet fully developed into academic languages. Translation of learning material is difficult, because particular terms have yet to be developed or agreed upon (Patel *et al*: 1996:89).

Apart from these obvious problems related to communicating effectively, there is another serious difficulty. Davis (1997:110) argues that many secondary school teachers (particularly at advantaged schools) believe that learners from other cultures have limited ability. These teachers have preconceptions about students' academic potential and generally associate degree of likely success with social background.

Now that we have supposedly moved away from apartheid and have embraced a non-discriminatory and non-racial education system, it is essential to investigate the challenges of multilingual/multicultural education in particular settings to find how teachers are experiencing the change.
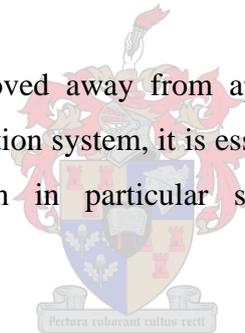
1.2   BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

When I started this research, I had been an educator at the same school for the past 13 years. The school was built in 1967 and had served numerous predominantly Afrikaans speaking learners for over 30 years. Consequently, Afrikaans was used as medium of instruction until 1999 which marked a dramatic change in the school population. From this point on, African learners were admitted to the school. These changes meant that new challenges had to be met by teachers since the learners were no longer predominantly Afrikaans. The most demanding challenge has been the change from Afrikaans as sole language of teaching and learning (LoLT) to English and Afrikaans as parallel LoLTs. At the time of the change, all members of the staff were Afrikaans speaking. At time when the research was begun, 28 teachers on the staff were Afrikaans speaking; the other four had one or two African languages as their home languages. None of the teachers was a mother tongue speaker of English.

The decision to introduce English as opposed to a black language or to continue with Afrikaans as sole LoLT was complex. There was an obvious need to accommodate the new constituency. The choice for English instead of a black language was ultimately because most of the material and sources available were in English. The school was unable to find a single book available which had content material (related to the school curriculum) in one of the African languages. However, even if one book in an African language had been available, then the staff felt that the speakers of the other African languages would be at a disadvantage. Another reason was that few teachers could speak an African language, while most of the teachers felt relatively at ease with English. Finally, since English is regarded as an international language, it was thought that learners would gain from learning it and would be better off speaking it.

At present the school has: 632 Afrikaans, 175 Setswana, 44 IsiXhosa, 38 Sesotho, 8 IsiZulu, 5 English, and 1 Sepedi learner.
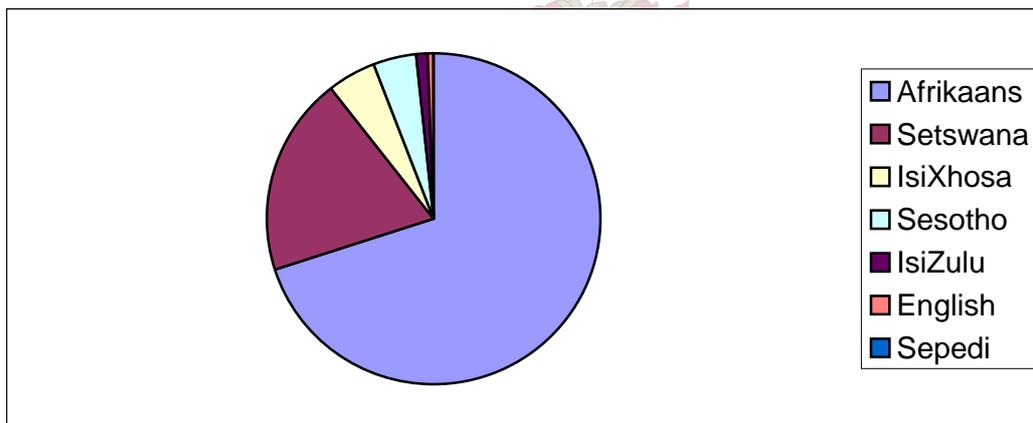
Figure 1.1   Mother tongues of learners at the school

The "language problem" was not the only challenge. As Bennet (1995:265) has noted, the multilingual/multicultural classroom ideally requires that a teacher should be fully aware of differences between learners, and that the teacher should be flexible enough to cope with conditions and situations, which may be very different from those in a classroom which is culturally homogeneous. Bennet (1986:128) cites a number of problems which may occur in a multilingual/multicultural setting and which might have implications for teaching:

- The educator may not recognise or appreciate the past experiences or opportunities (pre-knowledge) of the learners

- The evaluation and assessment measures which are employed, may not be appropriate for all the learners

- Learning strategies and content may not have been developed for the different cultural groups

- The teacher may lack understanding of the cultural differences of his/her learners

- All the learners may not be fluent in the medium of instruction (in the South African context this would point to the move away from mother tongue instruction in a culturally pluralistic environment as well as to problems experiences when the switch to teaching through the medium of English is made)

- The learners may have learning style preferences which are not acknowledged or provided for by teachers.

Heese (1990:16) similarly states that the polycultural requires the following:

- Learning, content should represent the learner's lifeworld

- Teachers should be trained to provide adequate learning opportunities for diverse learners

- Teachers should be capable of creating supplementary educational materials and programmes for learners who have specific needs in this regard.

The demands made on a teacher in a multicultural classroom are enormous even in smaller classes than the present situation of up to 60 learners in a class.

1.3   THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The research aimed to recount the lived experiences of teachers in a specific multilingual environment. In so doing it hoped to identify some of the teaching and learning challenges in such a situation as a first step to finding some of the ways in which these challenges could be met. The second aim was to describe some of the challenges posed by a change in the language of instruction (LoLT) and how it affects the work of teachers in a particular multilingual setting.

The third aim of the research was to gain fresh insight into the phenomenon (multilingualism) to establish priorities for further research.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research Design

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 72) maintain that with any scientific enquiry the researcher has to: "determine what you're going to observe and analyse". According to them the researcher has to know "*why*" and "*how*" a phenomenon is going to be observed, before interpretations can be made. In order to investigate how teachers experience the multilingual/multicultural classroom, a qualitative approach to research was employed. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985 as quoted in Maykut and Morehouse, 2003:174) a qualitative study enables the researcher to gather enough knowledge on the subject under investigation to make it possible to understand situations in their context.

1.4.2 Literature review

Primary and secondary sources were studied to gain an overview of multi-lingualism/multiculturalism at school level in South Africa and other parts of the world and the ways in which teacher education attempts to help aspirant teachers meet the challenges in the classroom.

1.4.3 Methods

Two methods were used to produce data: semi-structured interviews, and observation.

1.4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

In this research, interviews were conducted with five educators at the school where I teach. The aim of the interviews was to find out how teachers felt about the multilingual/multicultural classroom. This was achieved by allowing the respondents to respond to questions which were put in as relaxed a manner as possible. In this I was guided by (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997:2-5). The free attitude interview, which was used in this

study is a person-to-person method to obtain information, concerning an opinion, and the researcher (interviewer) is non-directive.

1.4.3.2 Observation

Classroom observation meant that I was able to experience at first-hand how teachers operate in a multilingual/multicultural classroom.

Since I believe that the environment plays a role in shaping experience, I felt it was also necessary to include a description of the school at which the case study was done. I have attempted to describe the situation from a neutral observer's stance.

1.4.4 Trustworthiness, reliability and validity

In qualitative research of this kind, it is important to do all one can to provide a trustworthy account. Achieving reliability and validity is difficult. However, as Denscombe (1998: 87-88) puts, it one must attempt to enhance reliability and validity. In the case of this research, the participants were free to read what was written and to comment on any discrepancies in my description.

1.5   DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research assignment is limited to the lived experiences of five teachers at one school as I, a colleague of these teachers, observed it over a period of three weeks. As a case study it does not set out to provide generalizations, but rather to provide enough description for the relevance to other situations to be gauged.

1.6   OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature. It clarifies concepts, deals with language policy, teacher preparation, in-service education, teachers' attitudes towards language minority learners. It is devoted to the theoretical basis of multilingual/multicultural education.

The research design and procedure are described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 reports the findings. Thick description is used to discuss the school environment, and the learners and their teachers.

Chapter 5 offers broad conclusions, points to the limitations of the research and makes recommendations for further research.

1.7   SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an orientation to the research, describing the problem, and providing the aims and the research methodology used to explore the research question. The rest of the chapters are outlined. Chapter Two gives an overview of the literature studied in order to reach greater understanding of the phenomenon of multilingualism/multiculturalism in the classroom and how teachers experience the situation at first hand.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Van Ryneveld (1992:1) is amongst those who argue that in order to achieve a strong sense of common citizenship, the education system should be structured in a way that makes it possible to celebrate diversity and to strengthen relations between different communities.

Globally teachers serve increasingly diverse student populations from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In addition, many learners experience poverty, abuse or other negative effects that seriously affect their physical, cognitive and emotional development. The implications for the classroom, especially teachers, are enormous. Teachers therefore, need to be flexible in order to provide for the complex needs of a variety of learners (Van Ryneveld, 1992:1).

With the complex needs of learners in mind, Dicker (1995:17) argues that learning experiences should embrace as wide a range of cultural and individual differences as possible. This is no mean task, not even taking into account the additional demands made by South Africa's language policy. According to Heugh (1995:46) a number of educators have been investigating and experimenting with ways of facing multilingual/multicultural realities in a range of the South African educational context. Solutions as yet have been elusive.

Given the constraints of this study, it is obviously not possible to undertake a comprehensive exploration of the literature on the multilingual/multicultural classroom. What I do attempt to do is to single out some of the salient aspects in respect of the situation on which this study focuses. This chapter begins by defining the key concepts as they are used in this study. It then explores aspects like policies, teacher preparation, in-service education, ethnic minority teachers and the likely challenges in the classroom.

2.2   CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

2.2.1   Culture

According to Miller (1999:293) culture can be defined as the accepted patterns of behaviour, customary beliefs and assumptions. Gollnick & Chinn (1986:29), however, define culture as the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves in society.

A third interpretation, which is offered by Fennes & Hapgood (1997:16), provides a more general definition which includes the two views given thus far. For them, culture includes everything that determines interaction, relationships and social life within a society.

While Coombs (1985:244) overlaps to some extent with Fennes & Hapgood (1997), he takes a more systemic view. For him, the term culture refers to a society's value system, ideology, lifeview, norms, technology, political and economic systems, religion, myths and social structures. These aspects are manifested or expressed in different forms such as language, education, literature, art, architecture and the like.

In this study the term culture encompasses the norms, standards, beliefs (including values), religion, customs and social structures in which an individual operates.   Teachers in a situation where more than one culture is honoured would be challenged in terms of notions of fairness, consistency, tolerance, equality, openness (as opposed to bias) and trustworthiness, for example.

2.2.2   Multicultural education

There is no single definition of multicultural education that has gained complete acceptance. The five interpretations which follow illustrate some points of difference. According to Harrington & Hathaway (1994:280) ideal multicultural education involves an awareness and respect for other people and their customs, and where they come from. Fennes & Hapgood (1997:33) however, demand more. They argue that multicultural education is when a person learns the framework of intercultural communication and cross-cultural human relations and then applies it successfully to new cultures encountered.

A third interpretation of multicultural education requires a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education of all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic and gender among others) that students, their communities and teachers represent (Nieto, 1992:208).

The fourth sets more store by the richness that individuals bring to a situation as opposed to pluralism so focuses on multiculturalism as an effective and qualitative phenomenon that depends a great deal on individual thinking, perceptions and feelings (Nell, 1992:22).

The fifth interpretation overlaps with some of the others. Sleeter (1992:39) considers that multicultural education involves an awareness of broader social and social educational issues, and the development of a knowledge base about oppressed groups as well as a commitment to work with them to further their interests.

For the purpose of this study multicultural education will be regarded in the general sense as the education of learners with different cultural backgrounds but within the same school or classroom with a view to preparing those learners for life in a multicultural society. It includes a commitment to pluralism.
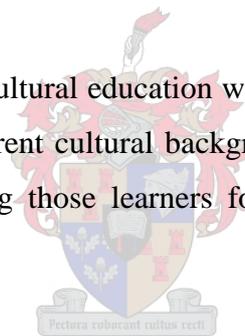
2.2.3 Pluralism

The definition of pluralism provided by Craft (1996:1) will be used in this assignment. Pluralism embraces an acknowledgement and affirmation of ethnic diversity, diversity of language, descent, attitudes or behaviour, coloured often by religious or physical differences.

2.2.4 Multilingualism

According to Harrington and Hathaway, 1994:280, multilingualism is an awareness and respect for other people, their customs and where they are from, multilingualism is also the education through two or more languages. The first is the language of instruction (which in some cases is the mother tongue) and the other an additional language, the lingua franca of the nation (in this case, English). In the context of this research assignment, multilingualism will be seen as the use of different languages by different learners in the same classroom. It

does not imply that all mother tongue speakers are accommodated as far as the LoLT is concerned. Multilingualism is closely tied to multiculturalism in that language is usually closely associated with culture.

2.2.5   Climate

In this study climate will be seen as the current, prevailing tone and disposition of the school towards collaborative work and feelings about working conditions (Miller, 1999:293).

Clearly, culture, the need for multicultural education, pluralism, multilingualism and climate all have implications for education. The next section looks language policy.

2.3   LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

The Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of South Africa adopted the new constitution for the country on 8 May 1996. Section 6 of Chapter 1 determines the status of official languages and of the other languages spoken and used in South Africa. According to Cachalia (1996:147) a number of stakeholders were consulted and involved in drawing up the language policy for future South Africa. Cachalia believes that language is centrally tied to issues of transformation. In the light of our country's attempts of nation building, language will either enhance or diminish efforts to accomplish our nation-building goal.

In a survey conducted by Cachalia (1996:54), teachers opted strongly for English to be the medium of instruction and to be the national language, without neglecting the mother tongue. According to Williams (1996:98) there seems to be consensus among various academics and organisation that English be the lingua franca of a future South Africa. (Cachalia, 1996:150) states that reasons given are that English is an international language, a language of higher learning and that it can serve as the linking language among the various linguistic groups in urban environments particularly. More important, it is an already established language with many resources to offer. According to Cachalia (1996:56) teachers perceived English as politically neutral and therefore a language which could link people of different cultures and backgrounds. An obvious implication for schools who decided to adopt English as LoLT, however, is the necessity for an enormous programme of retraining of teachers, including teachers of other subjects who have no training in handling the challenges of teaching

multilingual classes through the medium of English. Teachers themselves may also need to develop a degree of bilingualism (Heugh, 1995:3).

A decision to adopt English as lingua franca or even the widespread use of English in the public and education spheres does hold the danger that the other official languages will be marginalised. The language policy of the South African Constitution (Martin, 1997:6) aims to redress the injustices of apartheid, where two languages, English and Afrikaans were given status and privilege over all the other languages. The Constitution makes it very clear that every person shall have the right to basic education, access to educational institutions, and instruction in the language of his or her choice whenever this is practicable (cited in Patel et al., 1996). The challenge of implementing the language policy is to secure language rights, and one way of doing this is through education policy (Patel, 1996:129). In order to do this, multilingual language policy must be integrated with other educational policies which seek to raise achievement (Martin, 1997:11).

According to Genesee (1995:205) there is research evidence which suggests that bilingual education policies in supportive contexts lead to cognitive advantages and raise achievement levels in bilingual learners. Frankrijker and Kieviet (1992:30), however, argue the importance of teaching concepts through the language the learners speak at home. Where this is not done, in their view, it could inhibit the children's conceptual development. A possible problem here is that not too many teachers are even acquainted with the languages the learners speak at home. A further complication is that the different pattern of development of African languages means that some words cannot be translated economically into these languages. This means that it may not even be possible to follow a balanced bilingual approach in which the mother tongue is maintained as a medium of instruction. This makes it all the more necessary to offer as much support as possible to the learners.

Despite some of the difficulty in implementing it, bilingual education has gained wide acceptance among L2 educators and is supported by a large body of empirical research and evaluation studies (August & Hakuta, 1997:52). The theoretical foundation of successful bilingual instruction also has strong support among language educationists in multilingual communities. It is based on the assumption that there is an interdependent relationship between language development and cognitive academic skill (Cummins, 1999:151). Ideally, these linguistic and cognitive skills develop over time when the learner receives adequate amounts of comprehensible input.

2.4   TEACHER PREPARATION

2.4.1   Preparing teachers for language minority education

The core responsibility for implementing multilingual/multicultural education in the current policy environment falls on teachers. How to better prepare them to work and teach in multilingual environments should therefore be an integral part of initial teacher education (Gollnic, 1992; Kailin, 1994; Ladson-Billing, 1994). The majority, if not, all the teachers have not been prepared in their teacher education programme for a multilingual classroom. In addition, beliefs about and awareness of the possible value of multilingual education influence the type of multilingual education they are able to implement. Hamilton (1994) and Ladson-Billing (1991) argue that beliefs play a major role in how prospective teachers respond to the diversity they encounter in their classrooms. Beliefs significantly influence how teachers teach (Kagan, 1992:135) and therefore how they understand multilingualism and the attendant multiculturalism (Chavez, O'Donnell and Gallegos, 1994; Sleeter, 1992). What seems necessary as a first step is find ways to make them conscious of their beliefs and allow them to reflect on them in a non-threatening situation (Sleeter, 2001:100). Without this awareness, it seems unlikely that the transformation required for teachers to implement appropriate education and engage in a curriculum relevant to all learners will occur (Bennett, 1995:259). However, if one agrees that genuine respect for diversity requires attention to issues of social justice, a more conscious awareness of the possible value of bilingual education may not be enough. An examination of social justice should also be an explicit part of teacher preparation programme (Jennings, 1995:243). This is especially salient in a situation where the majority, because the do not enjoy the dominant position, take on a minority position.

In arguing the merits of critical pedagogy, Shor (1992:127-128) suggests the value of a teacher education programme that includes an awareness of social justice. In his view, children educated in classrooms characterised by dialogue and critical social analysis may develop higher levels of critical social consciousness. He argues that critical pedagogy encourages the kind of maturity that allows learner to question the unjust social structures they might otherwise unquestioningly embrace or ignore. It also develops learners' confidence in their ability to express their views. On the other hand, learners in less critical environments will often tackle or respond to any given situation, influenced by their cultural

background. Because they see things in a specific way in their culture, they put their point across from that perspective. This means that they will not have the benefit of an environment which encourages them to see things from different perspectives.

There are also benefits for teachers who allow learners to engage in dialogue; they can become learners themselves. Within the South African context, there are strong advantages for teachers to see critical analysis and dialogue as enriching the learning experience rather than complicating it. The critically conscious individual connects personal and social domains when studying or acting on any problem. Developing antiracist attitudes and actions requires increasing cognitive complexity and entails moving from simplistic, dualistic notions of social justice to more complex ones (Bidell, Lee, Bouchie, Ward and Brass, 1994). Countering and tackling issues of race, which can be sensitive at times, through critical thinking and reasoning, will allow teachers and learners to enlarge their belief systems. These cognitive and affective changes involve a recognition that social categories such as victim/victimiser or person/background are systematically interrelated and that oppressor/oppressed roles are relative to the position occupied in the system (Bidel *et al*., 1994:46). Critically conscious teachers see society as knowable and malleable (Carson, 1991:21).

Since individuals interact with the world by changing their perceptions of it, their self-concepts relative to it and thus their actions in it, Carson (1991:125) suggests two strategies to promote critical social consciousness. In this view, the first strategy is to deconstruct, that is, take apart and examine the socio-historical contexts out of which developmental theories emerge. This is particularly useful in pre-service programmes by examining theories in light of their values; pre-service teachers can recognise that theories are constructed in social context to serve particular interest. This is the reason why people belong to different cultural, political and social groups. As a result, pre-service teachers can reflect upon how and why knowledge is constructed in the way it, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not. Pre-service teachers may for instance, question theoretical claims in light of their own experiences and examine theories for potential oppression inherent in making prescriptions outlining normative or healthy behaviour.

The second strategy that Carson suggests is to treat theories as prescriptive. His bold reasoning is that by treating them as prescriptive, individuals can use them to identify contexts as either encouraging or discouraging development. In this way, teachers can use theory to identify the treatment that culturally diverse learners should receive while at school. Bennett (1995:263) contends that future teachers are then better able to reflect upon alternative structures of schooling that promote the healthy development of all learners, including those learners from cultural groups whose experiences have not been recognised by other dominant groups.

Studies conducted by Harrington and Hathaway (1995:275) suggest in situations where it is impractical for student teachers to do conventional pre-service courses, computer conference activities can be used to access and transform pre-service education students' beliefs about their role and responsibilities as teachers in a multilingual/multicultural society. Gore (1993:99) on the other hand, sees dialogic interaction between departments of education, parents, learners and teachers as the answer. According to her dialogue opens student beliefs, worldviews and assumptions to critical analysis. Multiple worldviews are validated in the process, students become aware that different interpretations exist and are based largely on each interpreter's position in society. If dialogue does not occur, prospective teachers may assume, for example that they should communicate a specific worldview to all learners regardless of their ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status or gender (Harrington and Hathaway, 1995:276). Others may believe they have a responsibility to recognize diversity in classrooms and propose curricula to represent the various prospective learners bring to the teaching and learning situation. One option in learning centres that are well resourced is to allow learners to use a chat room and discuss issues relevant to them, such as education, race, culture and curricula in a non-threatening way.

Religion is a particularly sensitive aspect in our classrooms. In the past, preference was given to one religious group, ignoring the multi-religious make-up of South Africa. Newer policy in this regard provides an opportunity for learners and teachers and members of the community to engage in constructive dialogue, or for teaching of all the religions at school, especially those which are practised in the particular area or province.

History is another subject that creates tension amongst different population groups. In the past the history of our country was given from one perspective, that of the minority in our

country. Dialogue could make it possible for these sensitive issues to be explored in a constructive manner. To make a classroom multicultural, or to teach multiculturally, teachers must offer or generate multiple perspectives on any given situation or historical event (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1994:23). By doing this learners will see, understand and interpret the reasons why things happened in the past. Understanding our own identity and the culture of our community requires knowledge and recognition of our own cultures and communities and how they have shaped us (Cabello and Burstein, 1995:285). Clearly teachers would have to meet the challenge to encourage sensitive and mature exploration.

Another benefit of dialogue across differences is that we can broaden and enrich self-understanding as learners consider beliefs, values and actions from a fresh standpoint (Burbules and Rice, 1991:405). When individuals reconsider their beliefs as informed by the perspective of another culture, they come to value other perspectives or views. Lehman (1993:148) believes that this is because our values do not stand alone but they are influenced by other cultures around us.

Pajares (1992:43) presents another perspective. He argues that knowledge presented during courses does not in itself change beliefs, beliefs change as a result of experience. Teachers who come to the multilingual/multicultural classroom equipped with the knowledge they gained at the institutions where they studied, find that it is the experiences with these learners that effect changes in belief. This is a slow process: teachers need time to accommodate and accept learners for who they are. This suggests strongly that the adoption of new teaching practices and approaches involve experiences over time that challenge old beliefs and practices. Sleeter (2001:106) takes a similar view. He argues that in order for teachers to grow professionally, teachers need to modify their prior beliefs. This complex growth should be visible in their practice.

Sleeter (2001: 106) argues further that insight into the needs of another group is no simple matter. Sharing the same race or culture with learners does not automatically provide understanding, for instance. Empathy and an ability to communicate effectively with them are more likely to do the trick. Teachers still have to acquire specific knowledge about culture and specific teaching strategies to meet the needs of culturally diverse children in a sensitive and effective way.

Teacher preparation programmes must consistently provide information and experiences to help teachers understand they do not have to choose between a culturally blind approach and a stereotypic approach. "Teachers need to reflect on their beliefs and how these affect teaching practices rather than to assume or to stereotype when encountering students culturally, racially or otherwise different from themselves" (Cabello and Burstein, 1995:292). The primary goal of teaching is to provide appropriate and effective instruction for all learners, regardless of their language or cultural background.

2.5   IN-SERVICE EDUCATION

Solomon (1995:169) refers to a study conducted in Canada on teachers in in-set teacher education programmes aimed at preparing teachers for multicultural classrooms. More than a thousand teachers in 57 elementary and secondary schools were used in the survey. The information gained from the survey makes it clear that teacher competency has to expand in two general areas: knowledge about race, ethnicity, culture and the ability to apply integrate the dictates of multicultural and antiracist education policy to all aspects of curriculum change.

It is clear that teachers must be able to apply these knowledges. However, the process of change is long term.

Nevertheless, it seems likely that in-service education at schools can help teachers to gain more knowledge on race relations; racism awareness training can be of considerable benefit. According to a study conducted by Nell (1992:42) on multicultural education, it appears that implementing multicultural education depends on teachers' understanding and ability to introduce innovations. This makes it clear that teachers need to be empowered to deal with multilingualism/multi-culturalism and that this can be done through in-service training. Through development it is possible to find ways to work effectively with racial, social and cultural diversity in South African classrooms. Jennings (1995: 243) argues strongly that in-service training should not be "once off", but should be presented on a regular basis. If this does not happen, it is possible that we might neglect or return to our old school of thinking in dealing with multicultural learners (Heugh *et al.*1995). The organisation and structure of in-service training should be school based and whole school, giving all teachers the opportunity

to participate in the planning and implementation. Such initiatives should be "integrated into the routine of staff activities, making participation an expectation, not an option" (Jennings, 1995:243). According to Rovira (2000:79) prejudices are difficult to reverse, even when confronted by information which refutes them. We must recognize that it is usual to find discriminatory and racist attitudes in any individual (Jennings, 1995:2548). Discriminatory and racist behaviour appears when, in addition to the existence of prejudicial attitudes towards ethnic groups, personal or social inhibiting controls are immobilised (Grant, 1994: 13).

2.6   TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE MINORITY LEARNERS

According to Frankrijker (1992:261) the attitude of a teacher is the most important variable in the success of open learning situations. This is true, especially in the multilingual/multicultural classroom. Learners can sense a negative attitude towards them, especially in the remarks teachers make, or in their body language. Negative attitudes towards learners of other cultural groups will create tension in the classroom, which is not good for the teaching and learning situation. Negative attitudes towards learners will also hinder their ability to perform and they may do anything to show a teacher that they are having a problem with him or her.
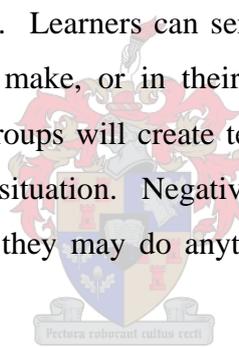
Dealing with attitudes is difficult because people develop their views over long periods. These cannot be adapted or altered overnight (Mattai, 1992:128). What makes transformation difficult according to Hapgood (1997:63) is that attitudes are partly conscious and unconscious. They reflect perception, indifference, values, lifestyles, confidence or lack of confidence, comfort or discomfort. This suggests that there are a number of factors which determine how a person relates to people of another cultural background.

Teachers working with cultural diverse learners should be particularly careful not to treat learners differently, because they come from a specific cultural group, but to treat all with dignity and respect, regardless of race, culture or perceived potential. The ultimate challenge, according to Agnihotri (1995: 3-5), is to see multilingualism as an asset.

2.7 ETHNIC MINORITY TEACHERS

The composition of a school is important because it should reflect the community it serves. While this may be true of the learners, the staff is often unrepresentative. In the teaching profession, ethnic minority teachers have a difficult task ahead of them, because the majority of learners may not relate to them.

Fuller (1992:130) argues that in a number of plural societies ethnic minorities are substantially underrepresented in the teaching force, and this has been an aspect of concern, because of the need for role models in both their minority and majority communities. The study conducted by Hood and Parker (1994) affirms this concern and argues that teacher education programmes make the task of educating teachers for cultural diversity difficult, because of the importance of a culturally diverse learning community to the development of intercultural teaching competence. Teacher education programmes need to have a diverse population among the students and among the learners they teach.

2.8 COMPLICATING FACTORS

Apart from teaching multilingual classes, teachers also have to attend to different administrative tasks. They have to allocate time for planning, evaluate learners as well as attending in-service training courses, like Outcomes Based Education (OBE). They must counsel and orientate learners, attend to visiting parents, organise extra curricular activities for learners, attend staff meetings and other different meetings, such as sports, culture, union, etc. (Helsby, 1999:93). Her research work indicates that teachers lack sufficient time to attend to their responsibilities and this overload leads to frustration and causes exhaustion. They need to attend to so many things during their working day. All these considerations limit the attention and effort that teachers can give to each task, and inevitably quality suffers, according to Woods *et al*. (1997:69).

The co-existence of different ethno-cultural groups in the same geopolitical space has created new challenges in our schools and society: we must now learn to live in a reality different from any we have known to date (Rovira, 2000:73). Opinions, beliefs, customs and habits change all the time and became varied (Clarke and Hirsat, 1992:95). Apparent uniformity is

giving way to a life that is more open, with greater variation. What it does is to add and contribute to the creation of growing diversity in an ever-increasing number of fields (Wiggings and Follo, 1999:95).

2.9   SUMMARY

This chapter has addressed some of the challenges presented by multilingual/multicultural education. This has involved outlining language policy in South Africa and its importance in creating a framework in which multilingualism/multicultural can be seen as an asset. It has also explored views on multilingual/multicultural education in South Africa and some of the steps necessary to prepare teachers for language minority learners in initial training education, on the one hand, and the necessity for in-service education, on the other, in order to ensure equitable opportunities for all the learners in our country.

This literature is seen as an essential preparatory step in for the investigation into the multilingual/multicultural classroom. The next chapter will discuss the design and the methodology of the qualitative research that was undertaken to describe the lived experiences of teachers in the multilingual/multicultural classrooms at our school.
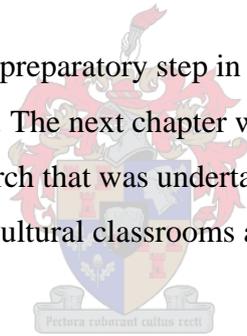
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a theoretical foundation for understanding a situation in which South African teachers find themselves in changed circumstances as a result of a new political and education dispensation. Within the multilingual/multicultural classroom, they take on the potential role of change agents.

This chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology and design which were used in the study of five teachers at a school in the Northern Province in South Africa. The chapter begins with a discussion of the broad characteristics of qualitative methodology, followed by the rationale for choosing this approach. Next a comprehensive description of the research design is given, including a description of the procedures used to select and interview participants. An account of the methods used to analyse, order and interpret the data is also given.

3.2   QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is an umbrella term covering many methods and approaches to the study of human behaviour. It involves becoming aware of an observed problem through a willingness or "a passion to see", implying a systematic openness to the values of others as they are relevant to the situation (Manheim in Webb & Glesnè, 1992:779). It involves experiencing the life world of people interviewed, enquiring about their background and examining data gathered in this regard (Wolcott, 1995:22-23), with the aim of understanding the situation.

Research in general provides a framework for practical activities by helping to build knowledge for practice through situation-specific data (De Vos, Schurink & Strydom, 1998:6). Where quantitative research deals with mainly numerical data, qualitative research data are principally verbal (Leedy, 1993). Also, qualitative approaches are not strictly formalised, the scope is less defined and a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted;

yet ideally, the two approaches complement each other (De Vos *et al*., 1998:15-17), with qualitative designs being less structured than quantitative designs, and with data appearing as words (Schumacher & McMillan, 1997:37-41). Qualitative methods, in other words, may be loosely defined as those research procedures which produce descriptive data as it is embodied in people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour rather than numbers. By these means the researcher strives to gain access to motives, meanings, emotions and other subjective aspects of the lives of individuals and groups. Even the language used in the findings of the research is the **lively, everyday language of the situation** (Lemmer, 1996:129, emphasis added) rather than 'objective' scientific language.

3.2.1 Rationale for the choice of Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative approach was regarded as the appropriate choice for this study for the following reasons:

- It is seen as the most appropriate methodology for an exploratory study of a hitherto little explored field;
- It is regarded as suitable because of its emphasis on description, induction, and grounded theory as a means of obtaining a general understanding of the lives of a group of people with their daily struggles;
- Since the late 1970s it has been found to be particularly appropriate for the study of people's lives with regard to their career development – for example, it has contributed to the identification of suitable life skills necessary for capacity building.

(De Vos *et al.*, 1998; Schumacher and McMillan, 1997)

3.2.2 Qualitative Research Design

Research design may be described in terms of both the manner in which the data are obtained, as well as the manner in which the data are arranged.

According to De Vos (1998:77-80) and (Hopkins & Antes, 1990: 112), qualitative research design encompasses all mechanisms employed in planning for the research including the procedures and techniques used to reach findings about the research. The purpose of a research design is to enable the researcher to plan and structure a given research study in a

manner that maximises the validity of the research findings (Mouton & Marais, 1993:33). It includes planning for the research sample as well as respondents for the research, thus making it possible to discuss subjects of the population upon which the research is focused (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:44).

There are various approaches that can be employed in designing qualitative research, such as ethnography, phenomenology, biographical, historical, action research, a clinical model, symbolic interactionism, and grounded theory (De Vos *et al*., 1998:80-81).

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN OF THIS STUDY

In this research, a phenomenological strategy was employed. This means that I have tried to explore and understand the teachers' experiences in the multilingual/multicultural classroom. The reason for my choice is that a phenomenological strategy is suited to interviewing as well as participant observation. I used the guidelines provided by Merriam (1998:16-17):

- Firstly, the "subjective experience" is explained. In this research, multilingualism/multiculturalism, its implications and effects in school are explained;
- Secondly, the mechanisms used to address the experience are explored. These are the strategies teachers use to cope in the multilingual/multicultural classroom;
- Thirdly, these experiences are conceptualised. This implies, the nature and context of multilingualism including perceptions of educators towards learners who are not mother tongue speakers; and
- Finally, there is intuitive reflection on the experiences. Here I tentatively explore and interpret how teachers can deal more effectively with the challenges posed by the multilingual/multicultural classroom.

Merriam (1998:17) asserts that this process brings together the actual and the aspired situation.

3.3.1   Sampling and Selection

Mouton (1996:132), defines a sample as a process whereby a small scale representing the whole is chosen for research, because the entire population concerned cannot be investigated. LeCompte and Preissel (1993:78-79) state that a probabilistic sample uses two kinds of samples: systematic and random sampling.

In this research I used a random sampling method. A random sample requires that subsections of an accessible sample be identified. In this case all teachers in the identified secondary school had a chance of being selected. Respondents were initially informed about my intention to write a research report long before the interviews actually started, so that they could have time to consider whether they would be willing to participate. The principal co-operated by supplying me with a list of the teachers. Using a system that would reflect the ratio within the school, I then chose every fourth female and every seventh male name from the teachers' list was selected. This gave me a total of five teachers. Of the five, three were females and two were males.

3.3.2   The Dimensions of the Research

According to Creswell (1994:4-5), a qualitative research paradigm involves ontological, epistemological, anxiogical, rhetorical and methodological dimensions. These dimensions are briefly discussed below:

3.3.2.1 Ontological dimension

This dimension reflects the perception of reality of the research topic which influences the construction of the research design.

A number of realities exist, such as that of the researcher, the respondents and the research report reader (Creswell, 1994:4). The researcher in this case, is myself, the respondents are the five teachers who were interviewed and the report reader is my supervisor, examiners and everyone who will read this report for further research.

3.3.2.2 Epistemological dimension

This dimension refers to the nature, sources and limits of knowledge generated by the research. In the case of this research, knowledge stems from the interaction in the interviews and indirectly through the observation of these respondents (Creswell, 1994:4).

3.3.2.3 Anxiological dimension

The anxiological dimension is the value-laden nature of the study. The implication in this case was that my own values and even biases could be reflected in my record of the data generated in the field (Creswell, 1994:4). In this case, as a way of countering this, I had to approach the respondents personally and in writing about my intentions in this research report. I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity of their names and information that is gathered through the interviews and my observations in the classroom. I also assured them that I would be fair, sympathetic and empathetic in gathering data. As a further mark of my trustworthiness, I promised the respondents that they would be able to read and comment on my findings.

3.3.2.4 Rhetorical dimension

The rhetorical dimension refers to the need for the use of informal language by the researcher while interviewing respondents (Creswell, 1994:4). In the case of this research, it meant that the teachers could express themselves freely. It also encouraged them to respond fully to the questions asked. Four of the respondents didn't mind my using the names I usually use and this allowed them to be at ease.

3.3.2.5 Methodological dimension

Cresswell (1995:5) argues that the method applied in qualitative research is inductive in nature. This implies that data cannot be deduced or quantified. Induction leads to tentative conclusions (De Vos *et al.*, 1998:93). In this case, an example is the people who say they do not think multicultural education will work, because the majority of the learners do not understand English and their home environment does not contribute to the culture of learning. This reveals their opinion and the particular view that they have of multicultural teaching which will no doubt influence the way in which they approach teaching.

3.3.4   The Interviews

The interview is a method to obtain information and the researcher is led by the nature of the research (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997:2-5). The free attitude interview, which was used in this study is a person-to-person method to obtain information, concerning an opinion, and the researcher (interviewer) is non-directive.

I had several reasons for classroom observation:

- To get first hand information on what was going on in the class
- To experience the atmosphere in the class
- To identify possible strengths and weaknesses
- To identify possible challenges.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the deputy principal's office to ensure that we would not be disturbed. The main aim of the interview was to obtain specific information on how teachers conduct and handle themselves in the multilingual/multi-cultural classroom. This was done by presenting respondents with semi-structured questions. This technique was chosen because the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer "to respond to the situation at hand" (Merriam, 1998:74).
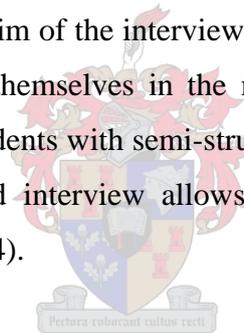
My conduct during these interviews was strongly influenced by the guidelines listed below (Meulenberg-Buskens1997:3-5):

- The researcher's attitude should be of unconditional positive regard, allowing the participant to be and do as he/she feels like. Only then will the participant feel encouraged to talk and to keep on talking.
- The researcher's attitude must convey an invitation for the participant to talk. "Attending" is the key to this attitude and it can be done in a non-verbal way, by eye contact and nodding or verbally by uttering non-significant encouraging sounds and words: "hhm, hmm…" and "yes… yes…"
- The researcher starts the interview by giving brief information about himself/herself and the frame of reference of the interview (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1997:5-8).
- The researcher should not ask too much clarification during the interview.

▪ The researcher should end the interview with a summary of all the preceding information in a reflective summary. The most important points of the interview should be reiterated. When the participant responds to this feedback with a statement like: "Yes, that is exactly how I feel/think", the researcher may assume that he/she has conducted a trustworthy interview in which the participant felt free to participate.

The purpose of the interviews was to "improve" the means of obtaining reality from respondents so that a reportable knowledge could be produced (Silverman, 1994:114). Producing reportable knowledge implies that reliable information must be maximised while distortions are minimised.

The researcher has to identify "how the meaning-making process unfolds", so that what the respondents know is captured and faithfully reported in the findings of the research (Silverman, 1994:113-114). I set out therefore, to report as fully and honestly as I could, the information disclosed to me by the teachers themselves.

During the interview, I used an audio-tape to capture conversations and noted down what I observed. This generated the required data. The captured talks are then preserved for data analysis (Merriam, 1998:97). It was easy for me to have an open door policy so that more information could be acquired when the need arose. By open door policy it is meant the researcher's ability to contact interviewers when there is a need to do so. The policy further provides for information to be confirmed. Because we were all at the same school and had known each other for some time, this was not difficult to achieve.

3.4.1 Interaction with respondents

From the staff list, teachers were selected as stated in 3.3. All but one respondent agreed to be interviewed at school. The other respondent (Teacher C) was interviewed at home.

Only two respondents did not mind my using their real names.

3.4.2 Advantages of conducting interviews

▪ Personal contact

The respondents supply information directly. In so-doing the researcher can even motivate respondents to participate.

▪ Opportunity to explain

Further explanations can be given, where necessary. It was a great advantage in this research, because words and terminology that were used could be clarified where necessary.

▪ Flexibility

Where a respondent could have just answered "yes" or "no", the interview allows them to answer in their own words and qualify their statements. The researcher can decide whether to categorise the answer as a "yes" or "no".

▪ Interviews have a broad pattern

In the case of structured or semi-structured interviews, questions are planned and the sequence of the questions is determined.beforehand. This means that it is possible to categorise answers more easily.

3.4.3 Disadvantages of interviews

▪ Time factor

In this research interviews were conducted during school hours, except for the one who took place at the teacher's house. I had to depend on appointments and the times that suited the respondents. Only one interview per day was conducted, to reduce the possibility of my becoming tired or less interested in answers given.

▪ Influence on the part of the interviewer

After two or three interviews, a researcher could begin to predict or even stereotype the response to certain questions. Great care has to be taken not to ask leading questions or to put questions in ways that might influence or shape the respondent's answer.

3.4.4 The researcher's role

According to Creswell (1994:147), interpretation of data is the qualitative researcher's concern. As a result, the researcher's biases, values and judgments are stated in the research report. This is because both the researcher and the respondents have "biases, predispositions,

attitudes and physical characteristics" that may influence data either positively or negatively (Merriam, 1998:87).

In this research, my role as researcher during interviews was to be very careful not to pre-determine meaning (Silverman, 1994:121), but to report respondents' values (those of the teachers' at this specific secondary school) including biases, values and judgments. To achieve this, I had to be careful to ask questions, observe responses, be a participant observer and record information. Being a teacher myself at this specific school, it was difficult not to be biased, especially when teachers shared experiences I had experienced as well. I set out therefore to report as fully and honestly as I could the information disclosed to me, by the teachers themselves.

3.4.5   Researcher effects

Certain factors about or concerning the researcher may negatively influence the reliability of the collected data (Mouton, 1996:148), for example factors such as the researcher's characteristics and the aim of the researcher.

Researcher's characteristics refers, for example, to the researcher's affiliation or the researcher's image. Affiliation refers to the institution the researcher belongs to. In this research, I knew the respondents because I was a teacher at the same school. I had a special responsibility to consciously maintain confidentiality and objectivity in my dealings with these teachers so that their trust in me would be retained (Mouton, 1996:149).

I took note of Mouton (1996:150) who cautions against interruptions while responses are being given. I was also guided by Merriam (1998:23) who suggests that the researcher should establish a sound communication mechanism and be empathetic to the respondents. This is because empathy establishes a rapport between the researcher and respondents. Furthermore, the researcher should be a good listener. Good listening is the result of developing a sound skill (Merriam, 1998:24).

3.5   VALIDITY AND ETHICAL ISSUES

3.5.1   Validity

Validity is measured by the extent to which events are captured faithfully (Wolkott, 1995:169). This implies that what is intended to be measured is indeed measured. In this research, I was concerned with both external and internal validity.

3.5.1.1 External validity

Here I have had to rely on what the respondents say, how they experienced things and how it influenced them. According to Creswell (1994:158) this contributes to obtaining genuine findings as the researcher forms a unique interpretation of events.

3.5.1.2 Internal validity

In order to ascertain that findings in this research would be trustworthy, I followed the contention made by Creswell (1994:158) that internal validity lies in finding convergence among sources of information. Reality, according to Merriam (1998:203), is what the researcher gets from observing as well as interviewing respondents. In turn, the respondents' views enable the researcher to "uncover the complexity of human behaviour in a contextual framework" thereby "painting" a picture of incidents (Merriam, 1998:203).

Member checks, observation and consciousness of researchers' biases are used as the basis for strengthening internal validity (Merriam, 1998:204). Strategies that were employed were an open door policy and observation as a form of acquiring information over a particular period.

3.5.2   Ethical Issues

The educators were each approached orally, then a letter was sent confirming details including intentions of the research. All requests were stated in the letter (see Appendix A). In the letter I also assured the principal and the identified respondents of confidentiality and anonymity. I detailed the reason for gathering data as well as the way it would be used in the

research project. I also sought the permission of the principal (see Appendix B), the Circuit and the Manager (see Appendix C). Before the interview, I gave each of the teachers an opportunity to offer their formal consent (see Appendix D). During the interviews, the five teachers concerned also gave permission for me to enter their classrooms and observe for myself how they experience the multilingual/multicultural classroom.

3.5.3 Theoretical Framework

According to Mouton (1996:119) a theoretical framework denotes a thought process by which research is incorporated into an existing body of knowledge relevant to the topic investigated. It attempts to combine thought and its application.

A theoretical framework served to provide a relationship between key factors being researched, such as multilingualism/multiculturalism, teachers as change agents, teacher preparation, in-service education and challenges. Reviewing relevant research literature provides a map for the researcher of a field being researched (Mouton, 1996:119). Mapping in this research consists of the following:

- theories on multilingualism/multiculturalism
- teachers as change agents
- teacher preparation
- in-service education and
- how teachers deal with the challenges.

Having provided the theoretical framework, the next section deals with the demarcation of the research.

3.5.4 Demarcation of research

Creswell (1994:170) contends that demarcation in a research study provides for establishment of boundaries, expectations, reservations and qualifications inherent in every study. In this case, the research on how teachers give account of themselves in the multilingual/multicultural classroom is restricted to our secondary school in the Potchefstroom district.

3.6   QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY – THE THEORETICAL BASIS AND MAIN CHARATERISTICS EMPLOYED

3.6.1   Introduction

With the aim of this research being to examine the life-world of five teachers, a qualitative approach was considered to be the most suitable for the subject of the examination. The aim has been to explore, describe, explain or understand the everyday life of the people interviewed, in order to obtain new insights and provide meaningful interventions into the teaching of life skills, with education as one of the "caring professions" functioning in "a world of scarce resources" (see de Vos *et al.*, 1998:5-20).

To aid the understanding of the life-world of the participants involved, the findings are presented in natural language to be able to represent the findings from their own frame of reference. This attempts to seek understanding of the "shape" of the life histories, circumstances and activities, as well as the "why", gathering and presenting data in such a way that the subjects speak for themselves (De Vos *et al.*, 1998**:** 245). The qualitative researcher believes that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur (Schumacher & McMillan, 1997:15).
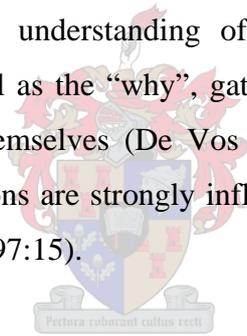
In this study the group selected was a group of teachers from the same school. The reflections on their experience of the participants chosen have proved to be particularly useful. They have been faced with many of the problems identified in the literature and have made conscious attempts to address them (see De Vos *et al.*, 1998:391). During the study, participants mentioned that they had gained new insights into their own experiences, which they viewed as enriching and empowering.

Woods *et al.* (1997:372) remind us that few straight answers may be expected in this type of research: the scope and depth of human experience does not lend itself to simple findings or solutions.

3.6.2   The role and stance of the researcher

The researcher comprises the key research instrument in qualitative research, collecting and analysing the data obtained from the natural setting of the participants with a view to improving or contributing to reform, in this case, the world of education. It also involves "posturing" (taking a stance) by the researcher, through active listening and being "problem-focused", analogous to being familiar with the field as with a "market place of ideas" (Wolkott, 1995:4-15).

Interviews are termed ethnographic interviews, in which the researcher has in-depth discussions with people included in the study and these discussions are taped for later analysis. Although questions might be used, the persons interviewed are encouraged to talk in detail about their experiences, topics and areas of importance to them. The art of listening is also a demanding task, requiring that the researcher listen with all his or her senses, and take on the role of the other person to see the world as the participant does (Schumacher & McMillan 1997:43 and 415-421).

3.6.3   Dilemmas of the researcher's role

Meanings and interpretations of interaction deduced by the researcher in qualitative research, may give rise to certain dilemmas.   However, if these matters are handled sensitively, they can also be a source of strength (Wood *et al*., 1997:375-381). The first consideration is that of involvement versus distance: immersion on the one hand and scientific appraisal and objectivity on the other. Secondly, there needs to be a balance between creativity and evaluation, which may be arrived at by constant comparisons with the literature in order to identify ambiguities or contrary evidence.

In this research there has been no experience of conflict, as there has been a clear and open relationship between researcher and participants, resting on a clear understanding of what the objectives of the research have been, respect for persons involved and "non-negotiable" markers laid down by ethical rules of conduct agreed upon.

3.6.4   Issues of objectivity and subjectivity

These two concepts form "a dyad as partners in research". Subjectivity is often seen as distortion and bias, depending on the stance taken (see Jansen & Peshkin, 1991). It is, however, strongly connected to the place of values in society and prevailing mental and philosophical attitudes.

In this research, I tried to generate valid data within a relationship of reciprocal trust and rapport, thereby enabling the participants to willingly share knowledge of their life-world. This requires that I had to temporarily attempt to suspend my own beliefs, maintaining a certain objective detachment and an attitude of critical awareness in a stance of delicate balance between objectivity and empathy. According to Grant and Fine (1992:432-433) all research has some element of subjectivity, with a contemporary trend to view qualitative research as more akin to literacy criticism than to quantitative research. Jansen and Peshkin (1991:704-705) argue for necessary subjectivity in educational research and evaluation, because personal experience and meaning, together with introspection, often have more concern with relevance than unfeeling objectivity, as emotional reactions can often enhance the accuracy of research concerning the personal experience of human beings.

3.6.5   The inductive nature of the research

As in other qualitative research, theory in this study is derived from the material collected during the research process, which reformulates and clarifies the thinking of the researcher in the process of the investigation. Patterns emerging from the data form a theory known as grounded theory, which fits the situation under observation and attempts to provide relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications (De Vos *et al.*, 1998:265-267). Birley and Morland (1998:28-29) state that grounded theory seeks to establish theory from the data obtained in the research, reworking facts in an original way to add to the pool of knowledge.

De Vos *et al*., (1998:267-270) have stated that questions need to be asked which would enable researchers to find answers to issues which seem to be important but remain unanswered. This kind of qualitative evaluation seeks to describe and interpret, with accurate description being the precursor of interpretation.

Guba and Lincoln (1989: 143) see interpretation as reality created by people when they configure certain available information into some systematic "sense-making". They argue that

> constructions come about through the interaction of a constructor with information, contexts, settings, situations, and other constructors … using a process that is rooted in the previous belief systems, values, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments, and achievements of the constructor.

The researcher acts as to mediator, creating a situation in which the informants (co-constructors) describe what they see themselves doing and hear themselves saying.

3.6.6 Data collection and production

Data collection is, according to Birley and Moreland (1998:40), not merely a process of collection, but also a process of creation. The data collection techniques used in this study have involved participant observation, and intensive interviewing recorded on tape. The literature survey was used as a basis for exploring the data-rich material. The participants' personal experience and perspectives operate as "the life behind the data".

3.6. 7 Data analysis

The process of data analysis followed the identification of themes in the interview transcripts and documents. The analysis of data was preceded by predetermined steps such as careful listening to the recordings (see Appendix H for an excerpt from the transcripts), and reading and rereading of fieldnotes to ensure trustworthiness, analysis and grouping according to important recurring topics or emerging themes. This is, according to Birley & Moreland (1998: 30), just as important as data collection and is the real essence of the research process. Qualitative studies aim at extension of understandings rather than generalisation of results. Generalisability is frequently not the intent of the study (Schumacher and McMillan, 1997:402).

**3.7   THE CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE
       PRESENT STUDY**

Using the theoretical framework outlined above, a case study was made using semi-structured interviews as a primary method of generating data. A discussion of this follows:

3.7.1   Rationale for the choice of this methodology

Since I aimed to obtain insight into a particular situation, but had very limited time available, a case study seemed the best choice. As Babbie & Mouton (2001) point out, the value of a case study is that it lends itself to in-depth study of a small group and offers a high degree of validity. Or as Bell (1993: 8) puts it "it is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale."

3.7.2   Sample population

It was decided to interview a sample population of five professional teachers, two male and three female. Most qualitative research uses small samples (De Vos *et al*., 1998:253-255) on account of the following considerations:
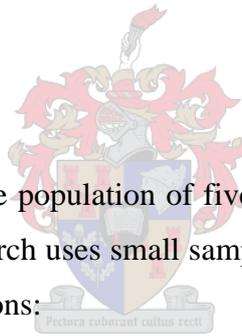
When searching for understanding of the meaning behind behaviour, a small sample approach is seen to be more effective regarding the detail and quality of the experience of an individual or a small group. It portrays representation of certain cultural experiences influencing the validity of the sample, with depth of investigation being the aim, rather than breadth.

Participants were also chosen for the following reasons:
- They were from different age groups
- I had known all of them for a number of years
- Not all of them are married
- They were not all from the same cultural group: two were African and the other three were "coloured"

It was recognised, from the literature studied, that since this was an initial exploratory study of limited scope, it would be wise to choose a group from the same school since this would simplify the task of identifying themes in the data produced.

3.7.3   Data generation and interviews

This research was done with the aim of contributing to an understanding of how multilingualism/multicultural affects teachers' lives and how they respond to these challenges. It was hoped that this would throw some light on how teacher education programmes could better equip teachers.

The interviews were conducted during the period from October 2001 to November 2001. Interviews were tape recorded and brief notes made throughout. Most interviews began with same brief social contact and were followed by the researcher's short re-explanation of the purpose of the project and a few general guidelines for the interview process.

A semi-structured intensive interview was then conducted, focussing on, among other things: family and educational history, present work experience and the accompanying transitions, challenges of the multilingual class, lesson preparation, learning material and strategies employed in the classroom (see Addendum E). This was done in an effort to obtain insight into their day to day experiences in the multilingual/multicultural classroom.

The interview was conducted as an ordinary conversation, during which I listened intently and occasionally asked for further information. Recorded interviews were carefully listened to and transcribed within days of the interview.

The interviews were conducted more in a spirit of friendship than of a formal investigation and may be described as a way of seeking to understand human behaviour and experience through grappling with the processes by which people construct meaning. Of special interest to me were the ways in which participants reconstructed their careers in relation to the thinking that this research invited them to do.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES

The detailed analysis of the data began during the interviews and continued during the conducting of the different interviews. At the stage when all the interviews were concluded, transcripts were made and filed under the pseudonyms together with the sheets containing background information. These transcribed copies were read, re-read and then carefully reflected on. The discussion is supported by quotes from the interviews with participants or references to the classroom observations.

3.9   LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Since the work was being done for a research assignment, a small sample was used for the research and the empirical research was conducted in less than two months. Although the aims of the research were to gain insights into the life world of teachers, male and female, teaching multilingual classes, to understand and to describe the behaviour of teachers within this, only a few "snapshots" could be taken. The research is not generalisable.

Furthermore, the study could not identify all possible themes relevant to the multilingual/multicultural setup. A focus of this study has been on the qualities and skills needed by a particular group of men and women facing new challenges, as well as on their efforts to achieve success.

3.10   CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the design, methodology, the researcher's role, validity and ethical aspects of this research. The purpose of this chapter was to describe the procedures used to produce data from teachers on how they experienced the multilingual/multicultural classroom and from the context in which they teach.

Data were collected through observation and individual interviews. The data collection instruments used in this research were interviews with educators as well as observation in the classroom and of the school environment. These data are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: REFLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will reflect on the lived experiences of five teachers in multilingual classrooms. Data were produced during the observations of classroom practice as well as the interviews conducted with the headmaster and these teachers.   Corroboration of the data will be done by means of triangulation. In narrating what I thought to be the general practice or views of particular a teacher, I will use the present tense.

4.2   THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The environment at a school plays an important role, affecting the performance and behaviour of both learners and teachers. When the environment is uninviting, for example because it is filthy and in a mess, it negatively influences the ethos of the school. The opposite is, of course, also true. If the environment is clean and well maintained, learners and teachers are influenced positively.   It is because of this that I have added the environment in this study.
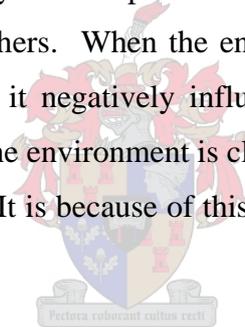
The school has two sections, namely the old building with its own administration block, which is used by the community as a day care centre. There is a person who is responsible for looking after the learners. He sees to it that they do their homework and keeps them busy with activities until their parents come and fetch them. On Wednesdays students from the University of Potchefstroom do sporting activities such as cricket, soccer, rugby and hockey with the learners. They also help with reading and telling Bible stories.

The new administration block of three offices faces three parallel blocks of classes forming a "cul-de-sac". The principal's office is on the extreme left hand, facing the classes. The staff room is on the left behind the last block of classes. The principal has to walk approximately 20 metres to the staff room. This means that his visits to the staff room are less frequent and more formal than if his office had been closer.

The part of the school yard nearest to the new administration block is very neat. There are clear demarcations so that learners or people from outside do not trample the lawn or flowers. Toilets and classrooms are still in good condition except for those classes which form part of the old administrative block. The reason for their poor condition is age and vandalism. People come after school hours and break windows, remove plugs, door locks and electric wires.

There are five people (three male and two female) of the non-teaching staff who clean the classes, toilets and administration building. One of the five is also the caretaker who is responsible for security at the school, but we still have incidents of vandalism, graffiti and theft. The school is situated in a relatively safe environment, but the gates are kept locked even during breaks, as a precautionary measure.

The learner enrolment as per the tenth school day statistics is 936. The school has six grades instead of the usual five. The reason that we have grade 7 at a secondary school is the enormous increase in learner enrolment at our primary school in the past few years. Afternoon classes were introduced to bring some relief. This lasted only for about three years. At that stage school committees from the primary and secondary schools together with the department reached an agreement that the grade sevens would be incorporated into the secondary school, to do away with the afternoon classes. Having grade seven in the secondary school has worked remarkably well. Even though the learners sometimes find it hard to make the transition from primary to secondary school, they settle in after a while.

Afrikaans and English are offered as languages of instruction. The reason for using Afrikaans as LoLT before was simple. The school served predominantly Afrikaans-speaking learners over the years since the community was and still is predominantly Afrikaans. With the change in the learner population of the school, however, English was introduced, alongside Afrikaans. The reasons for using English were as follows: the majority of the text books and sources were in English: English seemed an attractive option since it is an international language and it could serve as a medium anywhere in South Africa. No African language is offered at the school as a LoLT or as a subject due to unavailability of books and material. Furthermore, there are only four teachers who can speak African languages at present.

The staff consists of the principal, one deputy principal (female), three heads of departments, eight female teachers and 15 male teachers. The age range is between 25 and 58 years of age. The staff is well qualified. Teachers are all in possession of a secondary teachers' diploma and some have degrees. The majority of the teachers are still in their thirties and are currently engaged in improving their qualifications at the local university or are involved in distance learning through other universities in other parts of the country.

The school starts at 07:30 during the summer and at 07:45 during the winter. There are two breaks, one at 09:50 to 10:10 (in the summer) and 10:00 to 10:20 (in the winter) and second break 11:45 to 12:00 (in the summer) and 12:00 to 12:15 (in the winter). A seven-day-cycle timetable is followed. There are three periods before first break and two periods between the two breaks. Formal tuition as per timetable ends at 13:30 (in the summer) and 13:45 (in the winter). However, there are informal afternoon programmes for grade 12 learners. These are presented by some grade 12 teachers and students from the University of Potchefstroom.

4.2.1   The principal

The principal is a middle-aged man who considers himself an elder statesman. He has a strong personality and is confident in what he does. He fits the Pigford and Tonnsen (1993:31) contention that "confident people are neither cocky nor self-effacing." He knows what he wants of his staff and the learners and he does not tolerate any "nonsense". He feels sure that he has the support of the staff even if only because of his age. This can be seen from this response during the interview conducted with him:

> *Age is on my side in that, even if I cannot tolerate anything, they accept it. I*
> *am able to say my mind to them without causing any conflict.*

He believes that he generally sets a good example, and can explain his behaviour when it does not appear to be:

> *I always tell the staff don't do things because you see me doing that. I know*
> *how to give good account of myself.*

He is the 10th principal, since the school was founded in 1967. His qualifications are good. He has a secondary teachers' diploma, a BA, a BEd degree and is doing a master's degree.

The principal relates well to the staff as can be seen by the ease with which they put requests to him.

He has one weakness – a quick temper.

> *I should not take things so personal, especially when they don't go my way.*

The good thing is that he is aware of this weakness.

> *If I can only work on my temper and don't allow my emotions to get the better of me.*

The principal tries very hard to maintain discipline and to see the school is well ordered. His ability to delegate duties to the School Management Team (SMT) has borne positive fruit at the school. The heads of department are responsible for sports, timetable, maintenance of the buildings, arts and culture and recreation. The Deputy Principal attends to administrative duties such as seeing parents, attending to day-to-day problems and monitoring the workings of the school while some heads of department assist him with academic issues such as ensuring that flexi-periods are utilised well by the learners and teachers. During the principal's absence, the school runs smoothly. This shows that generally teachers execute their duties, even when he is not there.
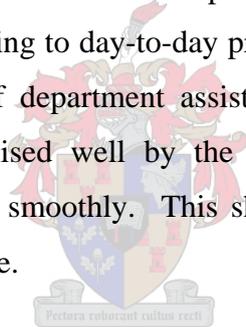
Educators are urged to solve class problems themselves in the first instance. Only serious matters should be referred to the office. This is a mark of the respect the principal has for the teachers. Before he attends to the problem, the teacher concerned is required to explain steps he/she has taken to combat the problem. If a teacher has disciplinary problems with a child, there are a few things the teacher has to do. First of all the teacher has to talk to the child to try to change his/her actions. If things continue and there is no change in the behaviour of the learner, then a head of department is called in to assist and give some guidance. If the situation remains the same a letter is written to the parents to inform them that they should come to the school to talk to the teacher. It is only after these channels have been followed that the matter is referred to the principal.

The principal views multilingualism/multiculturalism as a challenge that needs time and patience, but he also believes multilingualism/multiculturalism adds flavour to the school. His own practice signals his concern to be inclusive.

> *Every Monday when I stand in front of these learners I greet them in Afrikaans (goeie môre), English (good morning), Tswana (dumelang) and Xhosa (molweni).*
> *I'm lucky, because I can speak Tswana, Xhosa and Zulu, so it is easy for me to communicate with these learners.*

During the interview I had with him, the principal made it quite clear that teachers should not regard every day as the same, but be pro-active in dealing with learners with different backgrounds, cultures and languages. He ended the part of the interview dealing with multilingualism/multiculturalism in this way:

> *Teachers have to prepare themselves adequately in dealing with the different experiences that are being brought to the classroom.*

When describing his management, the principal was realistic about his skills as a manager and the extent to which he had attained his goals:

> *One cannot say I am a good manager, because there will always be something lacking. But I can say, I have managed to keep the school afloat. My problem is that I cannot motivate a few teachers to reach the goals of the vision and the mission of the school. We are still striving to reach our goals, steady but surely we will get there.*

My personal reflection was that because the principal had not yet found a strategy to motivate all the players in his team, this could have a detrimental effect on the school and the community at large.

4.2.2   Responses of teachers

In this next section, I will reflect on the responses of each of the teachers in the study during the interviews. Table 4.1 provides information on the respondents' gender, age, language, qualifications and experience.

Table 4.1 Respondents' gender, age, language, qualifications and experience.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Language	Highest Qualifications	Experience
Teacher A	Male	48	Afrikaans	BEd	22 years
Teacher B	Male	36	Afrikaans	BA	15 years
Teacher C	Female	36	Afrikaans	BA	15 years
Teacher D	Female	29	Tswana	HDE IV	3 years
Teacher E	Female	24	Xhosa/ Tswana	HDE IV	1 year

Before the interviews were conducted, respondents were assured of anonymity (see 4.2.2). Their ages ranged between 24 and 48. This reflects a healthy balance at the school between younger and older teachers. In a situation like this the older teachers could learn from the younger teachers and the younger teachers could learn from the older ones. At present, however, there does not seem to be much evidence that either the younger or the older teachers actually do so.

The three teachers in the study who had been in the teaching profession for a longer period had degrees whilst the younger ones had Higher Education Diplomas (HEDs). The teachers in this group related well to their other colleagues. All five were affiliates of the same teacher's union, while three of them were registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE). The younger two did not even know of the existence of this council. Another difference was that the three older teachers were married while the younger ones were not.

Teacher A has been an Afrikaans teacher for the past 22 years. He is in the process of changing his beliefs on culturally diverse learners. This is reflected in his words "change don't just happen overnight". He made it quite clear in my interview with him that his classroom reflected a combination of both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects according to the teacher are the fact that learners from different backgrounds, cultures, languages and lifestyles can come together with one common goal and that is to learn and master Afrikaans. Although Black learners find it difficult to construct sentences, *he admires the efforts they put in sometimes"*. In his view, this makes the teacher's job a little easier, because when the learners participate actively the teacher only has to work on the technical aspects of the language.

Another positive aspect, he feels, is the fact that the black learners compare their language with Afrikaans, and having identified differences, ask him to explain why the differences exist.

Teacher A views the environment in which the learners live as a very negative one hindering the learners' academic progress, yet he maintains the belief that all learners can learn – you just have to find the right way. He states that negative influences in the environment affect learners' performance:

> *Parents do not care [about education], and whether their children use correct Afrikaans or not.*

This teacher is very strict when it comes to the correct usage of the language. During the observation I noticed how disappointed he was with one learner who rushed through reading a poem. In this case, he actually made a point of stopping the learner and reading the poem himself. He did it with the necessary passion, intonation and actions.

> *I want them to feel what the author felt when he wrote the poem. They must enjoy the poem and the Afrikaans used in the poem.*

On the question of whether there was racial tension in his classroom, teacher A's response was:
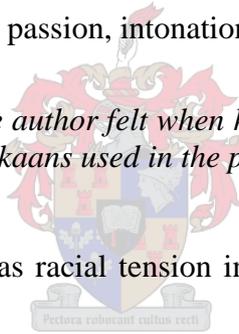
> *I adopt a colour blind approach.*

I saw very little evidence of racial tension or attempts to exclude others as far as the learners were concerned. Very occasionally, however, I observed signs exclusion. One example was

> *We don't pronounce the word like that.*

A typical response from the other learner in such cases would be an assertion of another identity:

> *It is not my language.*

Another concern for teacher A is the size of learners in one class. Looking at the picture below one can see, there are not enough benches for everyone. This specific class has about

56 learners. The teacher has to teach Afrikaans as a first language and also as a second language in the same class. The first language speakers are in the majority with between ten and fifteen second language speakers. On a question of how he manages to teach both first and second language, he expressed his deep frustration:

> *I'm doing the impossible, because Afrikaans has a lot of work. There is the language, comprehension literature and compositions. I cannot go through each one's work, because I have other classes as well. I know it is not fair to the learners, but what can I do?*

Teacher A adopts the following method in teaching first and second language learners. He spends the first twenty minutes teaching the first language learners. After he has explained everything and given them homework, he takes the second language learners to the staff room and teaches them there, away from the first language learners. "Under the circumstances this is the best I can do" was the explanation of the teacher when I asked him why he was doing this.

The teacher has to prepare his lessons for both first and second language learners. He is the Afrikaans teacher for both grade elevens and grade twelves. There are two grade twelve classes and three grade eleven classes. Although the teacher seems to cope, his remark is an indication of the strain that attempts to meet the teaching/learning challenges have resulted in:

> *I stress from Monday to Friday and it is not good for my health.*

Teacher A is concerned about the lack of groupwork. He admitted that although groupwork works wonderfully with the grade twelve learners, a "disastrous" experience with the grade eleven learners had made him unwilling to try it again.

> *I've tried it once, and that was the last, because it was a disaster. My class is nearer to the principal's office and the noise the learners made that day – the principal felt obliged to come and help me to get them quiet. Ever since I don't think about groupwork.*

This raises interesting questions about the role that personality and own culture impact on the willingness to see things from another perspective and to try new strategies. In this case, the teacher's practice is fairly conservative as seen from the emphasis on accurate use of language and his inability to find ways of containing the noise generated by group work.

Teacher B shared some of his beliefs with me about teaching strategies. He discussed the importance of motivating learners by using their experiences and by teaching at their level to ensure success. He said he uses a variety of modalities to teach learners. In teaching concepts and terminology he makes use of pictures and flash cards.

> *Once the learner acquires the knowledge, skill and understanding of the culture he/she is in, there is no reason why he/she cannot achieve success.*

He believes learners are deficient because of the socio-economic environment they come from and not because they are incapable of learning.

Teacher B is of the opinion that learners in the multilingual/multicultural setup struggle and find it hard to cope with explanations given in Afrikaans and English.

> *I explain and teach half of the time in English and teach half of the time in Afrikaans. Sometimes, I explain most of the work in Afrikaans, and the English-speaking learners suffer as a consequence. Other times I explain the majority of the time in English and the Afrikaans learners suffer as a consequence. It is difficult, but I try my utmost best, to strike a balance.*

Much more time is demanded, because this teacher has to prepare in both Afrikaans and English. His willingness to accommodate the Africans in the class (speakers of a third language) is evident in his use of English for the 'majority of the time'. (He is unable to speak an African language).

Teacher C says it has taken her almost three years to make the paradigm shift and adopt strategies to deal with diverse learners. Although she is not there yet, she is positive and sensitive to culturally diverse learners' needs and their cultural backgrounds:

> *I can use different strategies and techniques and not just stick to the basic one technique you learned through school.*

This teachers' adaptation to the needs of cultural and linguistically diverse learners is a product of her acquisition and use of the teaching strategies she has developed over the years. She knows how to present information to learners who have a limited proficiency in Afrikaans and English:

> *You can't just read out of a book and expect them to absorb the information. That is too passive, they won't follow with the result, their concentration lapses. I use an overhead projector, write on the board, not lecture style, show them pictures and then reinforce it. Instead of them writing reports, we do it together. Where a learner struggles with vocabulary or writing, we do it together and modify that kind of activity.*

Teacher C firmly believes that she has mastered the art of using groupwork:

> *It is impossible to use groupwork and you have not a little bit of noise. You as the teacher or facilitator must manage that noise. Learners must know, if one of the learners is talking in the group, the rest should keep quiet and listen. By doing this, they will also develop a respect for each other's opinions.*
>
> *I don't see differences between learners as a stumbling block, even when they grow old they will have and experience differences. The problem however, is with the adults. They sometimes don't know how to handle differences and they turn it into politics. Because of their inability, they create a platform for learners to attack each other. I use the differences of learners to create a sound and healthy atmosphere in the class. My learners know everyone is entitled to be different, and that should be respected.*

This teacher holds the viewpoint the multilingual/multicultural classroom is the best thing that could happen to this country.

> *If you want people to live in harmony, don't keep them apart, let them go to school together and find each other. They will be the adults and leaders of tomorrow. If they can accept each other now, they will also do it as adults and leaders of our country tomorrow.*

Teacher C also presented the view that the environmental experiences the learners bring to class are different and not deficient. It seemed clear from what I observed that this teacher believes that to be an effective teacher in a multilingual/multicultural environment you must

have a variety of strategies for different situations and modify these strategies to meet the needs of the learners in the classroom.

Teacher D has her own beliefs on teaching strategies. She believes in order to be a good teacher, all she had to do was to imitate good teachers who had taught her:

> *I remember going to school and we sat down and listened to the teacher and we were just able to do it.*

Once teacher D began teaching, she came to several realisations regarding her beliefs about teaching culturally diverse learners and about teaching strategies:

> *Even though I came from a similar background as they do, I know I don't think like they do.*

The teacher has realised that even though she is teaching learners who live in the same environment as she does, they have been affected by the significant change the community culture had experienced. Although she can empathise with many of the learners, she cannot understand some of their behaviour. She has experienced a great deal of frustration because of her inability to handle some of these learners and has sought solutions in additional preparation in an attempt to keep their interest. She admitted that much of the time she felt helpless and despondent:
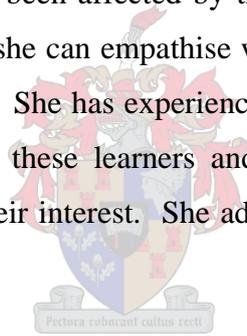
> *It causes me to cry at night, because I don't know what to do.*

The teacher was dismayed at some of the negative attitudes and behaviours she began to develop as a result of her classroom experience:

> *Getting to understand why they acted as they did, so I could at least begin to work on the problem was hard, because the first thing I knew was that they were just BAD.*

The learners' behavioural problems affected their classwork and tests. They performed poorly. During class times, in an attempt to encourage more active participation, this teacher tried using the question and answer method, but to no avail, the learners do not respond to any of her questions.

At this point the teacher, who entered the school and the teaching profession with the dream of helping culturally diverse learners, appeared disillusioned. She finds it very difficult to

come to terms with the differences between herself and the learners in her classroom. She nevertheless maintained the position that she, the teacher, was still responsible for improving the situation with learners who gave her a hard time and was looking for support or assistance:

> *If I can deal with the challenge effectively, I will enjoy teaching again.*

Biology and Science class

Teacher E is a first year Biology and Science teacher. The teacher started off by describing some of her beliefs regarding culturally diverse learners and teaching in general. As an African, the teacher believes her cultural and racial background gives her a special understanding of Xhosa, Twana and Zulu speaking learners and their needs that Coloured and White teachers could not enjoy:

> *My background helps me to understand them. I'm not thrown off by their behaviour. I'm coming in here and I'm Black and I live in the location. This helps me to understand what the learners are going through. Coming from a different background and looking at these learners would be scary.*

The teacher made it clear that she believes that if you do not have the same background as the learners, you might be puzzled and even be dismayed by the behaviour of these learners. Her comment here seems to explain some of Teacher D's difficulties with learners.

Teacher E provided this specific example of how her cultural link with Black learners gives her insights into their behaviour:

> *For instance, homework and studying will be beneficial for them in the long run, but they don't see it like that, because they live in an environment where they can't study, even if they wanted to. I was in a situation like that when I was younger, where I wanted to study and I had to just run off to study outside, because my parents were drinking and put the music on top.*

Biology and Science Class

In Biology and Science a lot of experiments are carried out so groupwork is necessary. Looking at the class picture, it is quite evident that groupwork is a priority for this teacher and that it is organised. A positive factor is that the learners have come to know each other, especially in the groups they work in, and generally work well together. However, the class is full to capacity and it is difficult at times for the teacher to monitor all the groups.

> *There are those learners who do nothing; they just expect the others to do the work.*

The teacher makes it clear that in these cases, the learners exploit other learners who are working well:

> *If you give them homework, you can be sure they will copy it from their friends in the groups.*

The teacher said, the time factor did not allow her to go through every learner's book to see if he/she had done the work. All she can do is to take in the books at the end of the week and mark some of the books.

There are not enough textbooks for all the learners. So what the teacher does is to make photocopies for those learners who do not have textbooks. The response is sometimes disheartening:

> *Some don't even appreciate the effort, because after two or three days you will see, the papers lying around, not even pasted in their books.*

It is clear that the teacher is faced with a situation in which the solution would be to transform the mindset of these learners. One way is to build confidence in the learners, for instance, by allowing the learners to work on their own. As was evident in this classroom confident learners are self-motivated and show appreciation for every effort, no matter how small.

Teachers in the multilingual/multicultural classroom are quite aware that every day poses a new challenge to them. No two days are alike. One day the lesson goes well and the participation on the part of the learners is excellent. On other days the learners are unresponsive. The differences in language background of the learners in these classes means that teachers have to prepare their lessons in both Afrikaans and English. Teachers and learners find it taxing to do the work, partly Afrikaans and partly English. Both Afrikaans and 'English' learners feel they are being neglected. At present, teachers feel they have no choice because there are not enough 'English' speaking learners to form their own class.
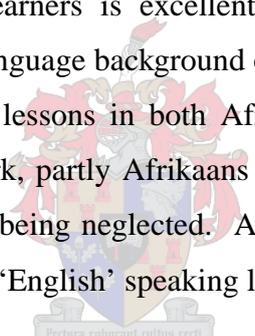
The five teachers in the study do not all use groupwork. This seems to be related to attitude to the learners, teaching style and personal confidence. Teacher A, for instance, who has shied away from using group work with the grade 11s, seems to have done so because of his seeming lack of control during the one instance in which he tried it. Teacher C and D are both open to new strategies and have been willing to change their teaching strategies. Unlike Teacher A, Teacher C sees possible noisiness during group work as something to be managed, rather than a reason to avoid doing group work. Her buoyance is in marked contrast to the despondency of Teacher D who seems to lack the management skills to make even a traditional whole class approach work.

At present group work does not exploit the possible advantages of having diverse learners. English-speaking learners form groups with one another, as do Afrikaans-speaking learners. Teachers divide the learners into groups by saying "Afrikaans learners you divide yourself

into groups and English learners you do likewise". Learners are divided into groups according to the language they speak and not according to their abilities.

Although the composition of the staff should encourage sharing of expertise during subject meetings and in-service training opportunities at school, this is not being done at present.

4.3 OBSERVATIONS

The observations were done in such a way that they did not interfere with the learning and teaching process. I occupied a seat at the back of the classroom. I noticed at first when the learners saw me, their faces reflected uneasiness. Every teacher, however, explained the reason for my presence and that it would last for twelve days. I believe they got used to the idea of my being there.

Sir, it's nice to see you again, we will have another good lesson today.

was a typical remark.

Relaxed attitude to researcher

4.3.1 Observation in Teacher A's class

The class sizes of the grade elevens are large, between 56 and 60 learners. The classroom was about 7 x 8 square metres. Benches were arranged in rows, there were five rows with at least eight benches in a row. Learners have to share some of the benches. It is difficult to teach under these circumstances, but the teacher manages the situation well. Afrikaans as a subject has many facets that need to be covered, like literature, language and composition and letter, but the teacher had a timetable worked out for them.

Part of the overcrowded class

Timetable – 7 day cycle

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Composition & Letter	Language	Language	Oral	Literature	Literature	Language

By having a set timetable the learners and the teacher know exactly what is going to be taught on a specific day. Learners know too when they enter the class, they have to be quiet. As I explained earlier, the teacher teaches the first language and second language speakers

separately. This means not only a linguistic division but also a cultural division as the African children all fall into the second grouping. The first half of the period is spent on teaching the first language speakers. There is usually not enough time to ask questions, with the result that the teacher often feels pressurised. One specific lesson on "woordsoorte" provides a good example. The teacher explained what a "selfstandige naamwoord" as well as what "persoonlike voornaamwoorde" are. Those learners who did not understand did not raise their hands or ask questions. First language learners commented that the teacher was always in a hurry, because he has to attend to the second language learners as well as them. After the teacher left with the second language speakers, those who did not understand, asked their friends. The first language speakers had to complete worksheets or assignments without the supervision of the teacher.

I followed the teacher to the staff room where he taught the second language speakers. The atmosphere was not the same as in the class. Here it was very cold and impersonal. There was definitely a change in the approach in teaching second language speakers. The teacher talked slowly and repeated what he had said many times. Concepts were explained by making use of pictures and wall charts. A lot of emphasis was put on the basics of Afrikaans and not so much on the technical side of the language e.g. learners, however, responded very slowly and it seemed they were not eager to ask questions. The teacher asked one learner to repeat a sentence after him, but the learner refused. Her reason was the other learners would laugh at her because she was not comfortable with Afrikaans. The teacher did not motivate the learner to at least try. My feeling was that this learner will always feel uncomfortable with Afrikaans. The only way to feel comfortable with any language is to speak the language. The teacher should have reprimanded the other learners, warning them not to laugh at one another.

In teaching poetry (gedigte) the teacher used the same strategy with both first and second language speakers. The broad approach was whole class, traditional. Learners felt that the teaching approach used was effective because they were able to remember well and it helped them to become more confident learners in the Afrikaans class.

The teacher read through the poem with the learners, discussed any words they might be unfamiliar with, dramatising the poem. He then asked different learners to read a few verses. He led them in clapping the rhythm of the poem. He then inserted the words while they

continued to clap so the learners could learn to reflect the rhythm in their speech. He helped the learners to find rhyming words.

The outcomes of teaching poetry were clear:

- Read a story and a poem with expression
- Dramatise the poem to facilitate a greater and clearer understanding
- Recognise the metre and rhythm of a poem
- Produce and interpret different types of text
- Write a poem about a picture.

It is significant that the outcomes do not include multicultural or multilingual outcomes.

On day four the learners were doing an oral lesson. The teacher concentrated mainly on prepared speech during this period. Consequently, they had been given the opportunity to prepare beforehand. I enjoyed the time when they talked about HIV/Aids. The experience and background knowledge of the learners came into play. Their enthusiasm and readiness to participate was evident. They had brought pictures to support their arguments and others even referred to their relatives who had died because of the disease.

During this period the teacher did not leave with the second language speakers; the whole class participated. The teacher asked learners from each of the rows to come and speak on the topic for at least 3 minutes. Both first and second language speakers were asked. The learners had done a lot of reading, with the result they could speak confidently. The topic also seemed to be one that interested them. This suggested that having the class together as opposed to dividing them into two groups
opposed to having them in two groups held many advantages.

On day 5 they did composition and letter. Learners wrote only one composition and one letter per quarter. The length of the composition for the first language speakers was between 500 and 550 words. The letter was between 200 and 250 words. This applied to both formal and informal letters. The second language speakers wrote compositions between 200 and 230 words in length. The length of the letters was between 100 and 120 words. The learners wrote both a composition and a letter. The second language speakers complained that it was too long for them, since their vocabulary has not developed yet.

This period was also used for writing curriculum vitaes (CVs), dialogues and discussions. The teacher informed them beforehand what was going to happen during each period.

One thing I noticed was that the learners were not given any opportunity to make fun of each other. The teacher instilled the importance of respect for each other. If ever they laughed at someone or something, they laughed together and that created a nice atmosphere in the class. When the teacher asked someone a question that he or she could not answer or he or she did not know the answer, insulting comments were not allowed. If this were allowed, learners could fall into the temptation of making racial remarks towards one another, which could have influenced the class negatively. The teacher is very strict on discipline. He is aware of the fact that discipline is needed to master the language, and the different components of the language.

4.3.2 Observation in Teacher B's class

Teacher B teaches Business Economics to grades 10-12. Learners have to choose between Business Economics and Domestic Science, therefore the class sizes are not that large. The teacher prepares his lessons in both Afrikaans and English.
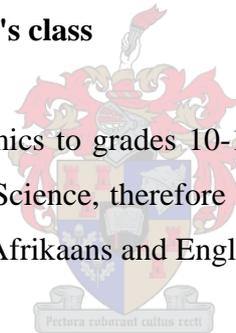
Before learners could go into the classroom they had to form two rows in front of the class and they entered only after the teacher gave them permission to do so. The teacher believed by doing this, he was instilling discipline, making sure that management problems did not occur in the classroom. Before starting a lesson the teacher explained the procedure of the day, and that is what happened during the period. In the classes I observed, learners always marked the previous days' homework at the start of the lesson, if there was any. If there had not been homework, the learners did revision for approximately 7 minutes.

The teacher was well prepared for all his lessons. He used flash cards to highlight key concepts such as partnership, closed corporation, employment, etc. The examples that were used were taken from ordinary businesses that the learners know and visit from time to time. In asking questions, learners responded well, but in preparing for tests, they did not do that well.

The teacher had a programme, where they wrote a test at the end of each week and a control test at the end of the month. After a certain section of the work had been completed, the learners wrote a test on that work. The control test at the end of the month covered a number of chapters which had been completed. Although the teacher tried his best to motivate the learners, they still lacked the eagerness to perform well. The average number of learners who performed well were about five from each class group. In trying to locate where the problem lay, learners made excuses:

> *We only study for the examination, the work is too much, we don't understand the work, we don't have time in the afternoon, we are getting too much homework.*

This seemed to indicate that, if learners did not want to work, they would not.

Teacher B, however, enjoys his lessons so much, that he often loses track. In explaining concepts in Afrikaans, he gets so carried away, that he forgets to switch over to English. He realises that only after one or two of the English-speaking learners raise their hands and make him aware that they are lost. He apologises and explains in English to regain the balance. The teacher is aware of his challenge of getting the learners to perform. The learners are different and so are there learning styles different. The teacher is still looking for different ways she can employ to help them do better.

My personal view is that as far as the language usage is concerned, the teacher should reach an agreement with the learners, that he will use half of the teaching time explaining in Afrikaans and half of the time explaining in English.

4.3.3   Observation in Teacher C's class

Teacher C is a very energetic kind of person and she is trying to filter that approach through to the learners. The teacher is a believer that:

> *There is a solution for every problem, you just have to sit down and think of ways to solve the problem, this is my philosophy when it comes to life in general and the classroom.*

The mathematics lessons were also a learning curve for me. I enjoyed the passion and commitment this teacher has for the subject and her awareness of the different needs the learners in her multilingual/multicultural classroom would have. For her mathematics is not just a subject, she believes mathematics helps you in solving life's problems. This teacher uses at least two to three methods in her approach to teaching learners. She is quite aware of the fact that learners do not all understand and learn things in the same way:

> *Learners are different, they learn different, now why not teaching them different techniques and methods.*

Teacher C is very strict when it comes to homework. Learners who do not do their homework, have to go to detention. She emphasizes everyday, that:

> *Mathematics is a subject where you have to practise every day. It is not something that you can master by looking at it.*

Teacher C easily identifies learners who have copied from their friends. For the first 10 minutes of the period in the classes I observed, learners did the work on the blackboard. If they could not explain the steps they followed in reaching the solution, she knew that the specific learner copied the work. She believes strongly in the value of a disciplined approach, so insisted that learners should have a routine when it comes to mathematics:

> *…because the routine allows the learners to work every day, and that attitude they will carry over to their workplace one day.*

When asked, the learners who copied from their friends said they had been unwilling to say that they had not understood the work. The teacher asked all the learners who had problems with that section of the work to stay behind for at least one hour after school so she could explain again.

Teacher C loves groupwork and this was evident during the observations. The benches in the class were arranged in groups of four. Although some of her colleagues complained that her class are too noisy, she remains unperturbed.

What do you expect, mathematics is a subject where learners have to speak, how can you have different groups speaking and expect that there should be not a single sound coming from them. It is better to have a noisy class where learners learn than to have a quiet class and learners learn nothing and they are sitting there passively.

The groups actively contributed to solving algebra and geometry problems. In order to deal with the multilingual nature of the class, she grouped the English speaking learners together, the same with Afrikaans speaking learners. Learners often see mathematics as a burden too hard to bear, but these learners found mathematics fun.

The teacher also had a timetable for the learners, so they knew exactly what to expect during a particular period.

I saw in these classes the ways in which multilingual/multicultural contexts gives us the opportunity to embrace our diversity. In the past learners had a great fear of mathematics, especially in our black communities. The diversity in our classes is a stepping stone to remove the fears of the past. The different approaches learners used to solving mathematical problems is a good indication of how they can also solve their differences. Working together they reach solutions. Mathematics require logical reasoning, to solve problems. However, if they can use the same co-operative approach to reach an understanding of each other in other terrains, it will be helpful in their dealings with each other, by accepting each other and be tolerant with one another.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Algebra	Algebra	Algebra	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry	Geometry

4.3.4   Observation in Teacher D's class

Teacher D had a difficult time with the learners, especially the Afrikaans speaking learners. This was not because of my presence – to them it was business as usual. The learners would come into the class noisily, pulling the chairs and benches, chasing one another and make all kinds of remarks like:

> *We will have another free period, who cares, we are the rulers in this class,*
> *the teacher don't tell us, we decide what is best.*

The learners disrupted the class for about five minutes and settled down only after the teacher said: *"It is enough now, you may sit down."* When the teacher said that they should take out their books, only a few responded and they were the ones who had done their homework. The learners who had not done their homework were ignored. The teacher worked only with the learners who have done their homework. Those who had not done their work, became bored and distracted the others with their behaviour. At the school there is no mechanism for dealing with learners who do not do their homework. Because nothing happened in this case, some of the regular homework doers ceased doing homework even in the short period I was observing.

The tests results were a good indication of those who were the hard workers and who were the ones with the 'could not care less' attitude. There is not a culture of learning in that class, because the influence of the lazy learners was very strong on the other learners. Most learners did not take part in discussions or the activities they were asked to do. When the teacher asked them questions, they did not respond. At one time the teacher was so disillusioned she just wrote the work on the board and asked them to write it down.

> *I am not going to explain to you guys anymore, unless you change your*
> *attitude towards me and your schoolwork*
> .

This situation was the same during all the days I observed and the teacher was just glad to survive.

Overall, the learners behaved well in the male teachers' classes, but in the female classes they took chances. In some classes where there were definite measures to deal with unruly learners, learners behaved, but in cases like teacher D's class where there is no clear pattern of discipline, learners enjoyed making every day a nightmare for every good teacher. As I watched I reflected that the situation was serious. If the status quo continued, she could have a nervous breakdown one of these days.

The situation described here is a good indication of what some teachers go through every day. This also indicated a need for training. The multilingual/multicultural classroom requires intense training to all teachers across the board.

4.3.5 Observations in Teachers E's class

In Teacher E's class there is set of classroom rules that learners have to obey. The rules are clearly visible when you enter the classroom and they are also pasted in front of their Biology and Science books. Here are a few examples of the rules:

- No one is allowed to eat and drink in class.
- Always show respect to the teachers, parents, friends and other learners.
- If you messed up, clean up.
- Don't take things that don't belong to you.
- Do your homework regularly.
- Always wear your school uniform to school and to other educational functions.

The learners knew the rules, so they knew what was required of them. The other good thing concerning the rules, was that the learners had drawn them up with the help of the teacher. The learners who disobeyed the rules, were warned orally and then in writing. The third time a learner is disobedient a letter is sent to the parent/guardian to inform them about their child's behaviour. The teacher files everything so it is possible to produce a clear record when the parents/guardian come to the school. The teacher tries to handle matters herself, attempting to find a workable solution with the co-operation of the parents/guardian. If the situation is not resolved, the Head of Department is called in. If the situation continues, the matter is being referred to the principal.

Biology and Science are practical subjects with the result that the teacher used a lot of groupwork. During experiments, marks were allocated to groups who set up the apparatus correctly. This in itself generates a nice healthy competitive spirit in the class. Because the apparatus is expensive, learners handled it with care.

The noise level was a bit high, but the teacher managed it well. The learners followed the steps carefully and they were part and parcel of each level taught during the time. Groups were formed according to whether learners were English or Afrikaans speakers. The fascinating thing about the 'English speaking learners' in their groups is that they discussed their work in their mother tongue, but when they gave the results of the experiments, they did this in English. The teacher was impressed and applauded the learners' efforts.

Excellent, you are doing very well.

The effect was that learners were motivated to continue doing good work.

My feeling was this teacher knows exactly what she is doing. If groupwork is to be employed effectively, she knows that the learners need to know precisely what is required of them. They have to behave courteously and show respect to the other members of the group. This teacher has worked hard to ensure that this is true of her classes.

The observations enabled me to notice that each teacher experienced the multilingual/multicultural classroom differently. The challenges, however, remain the same. The medium of instruction used, especially Afrikaans still needs attention. The stigma that is attached to the language is a cause for concern. There are learners who believe that it is the white man's language and they will always feel resentful. The teachers have a great responsibility to teach these learners that all the languages in our country are important and Afrikaans is one of them. We should use languages as a means of uniting us, instead of dividing us again.

It is important for teachers not to be prejudiced, because learners can pick that up very easily. Under stress, teachers can say things they should not have said. The multilingual/multicultural classroom leaves us no option, but to consider what we say very carefully.

My feeling is that the environment that the majority of learners come from is not conducive to learning. The challenge to teachers is to influence these learners so that they can go back and make a difference out there. Even if it would be difficult to change, change within the learners would be a first step. Change starts by creating opportunities for learners which could open up a whole new world for them. The negative environment can be seen as an opportunity to rise above the situation, against all odds.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter described the interviews that were conducted with the principal and five educators at a secondary school. It also offers a reflective construction of what was observed during classroom observation. The aim was to explore the lived experiences of each of these teachers in the multilingual education classroom. It appears that two teachers' experiences vary considerably and are mainly tied to their beliefs about education and whether or not it is possible to teach successfully in a multilingual classroom.

In the next chapter, the findings will be related to the two research questions and broad conclusions will be reached, including recommendations for teacher education and further research.
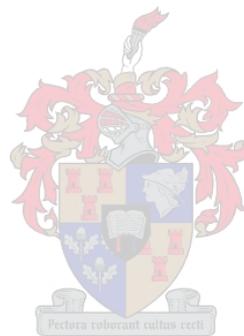
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, INTERPRETATION AND RELECTIVE CONCLUSIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this research was to recount the lived experience of teachers in multilingual classrooms in a township secondary school where learners are being taught through the medium of English and Afrikaans. This was therefore an attempt to describe the way teachers are responding to learners in a particular multilingual setting. Teachers are not only faced with curricula issues and how to encourage independent learning, but also have multilingual/multicultural challenges to meet.

The basic problem which was addressed in the study is rooted in the politics of South Africa, as the policy of apartheid, separate development, which was applied during the last half century, called for the separate education of members of so-called different population groups. A consequence of this policy was that learners were educated in separate institutions, where educational resources were unequally distributed among members of different race groups. Teacher education was conducted in institutions which largely catered for the education of particular races. Often it amounted to little more than narrow training.

Since the first democratic election in 1994, race is no longer a determining factor in learner access to schooling. Government schools are open to learners of all races in terms of the new models of education provision. Although there are still schools which find ways of limiting the number of black learners, steady progress is being made at opening education in South Africa.

The central issue is how are schools to meet the challenge of providing learners with skills, abilities and insights that will help them to function effectively in the new South Africa. Schools will need to ensure that they prepare learners for future life in a multilingual country by providing learners with curricula (with a multicultural perspective in content and process), social experiences (an emphasis on communicative ability and communication strategies) and an environment which not only fosters and celebrates diversity, but which also allows social restructuring with a view to achieving equity in social access (Heugh *et al*., 1995).

In this last chapter I first provide a summary of the previous chapters and then summarise and interpret my findings before offering reflective conclusions on the needs of teachers and offering suggestions for future research.

5.2   SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provided the background and rationale of the research. It also stated the research problem, aims of the research, research method, conceptual framework and the division of the chapters of the research study.

In Chapter 2, the literature review about the teachers in the multilingual/multicultural classroom was outlined.

Following the literature review, Chapter 3 dealt with the research design. This was within an interpretivist paradigm.

Chapter 4 presented the quantitative and qualitative findings produced during the interviews with the five teachers in the study and the headmaster as well as by means of classroom and other observation.

5.3   INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings with respect to the literature, interviews and observations will be related to the aims of the research in this section:

5.3.1   Findings in respect of the first aim

The first research aim was to recount the lived experiences of teachers in a specific multilingual environment.

Since the experiences were so different it is not possible to make general comments. What I shall do is to highlight what seemed particularly salient.

Although some of the frustrations that teachers face and their attitudes to their teaching did surface during the interviews, a fuller picture emerged during the observations. Teacher B, for instance, suggested during the interview that he was using a variety of modalities to ensure success. However, observation showed that while that was true, he also talked a great deal of the time. Although learners answered well during class, they did not do all that well in tests.

From the interviews and observation conducted, teachers (male and female), on the surface of it, do not mind having diverse learners in one class. However, it is clear that there are many aspects that they have not yet resolved. Their inability to separate overall performance from a particular individual's performance results at times in the making of unjustified generalisations. As Helsby (1999:93) suggests, they need to become aware of unconscious discriminatory acts as well as personal barriers that may hamper their performance. The findings indicated that there is a need to eradicate prejudices that fundamentally influence teachers in their interaction with learners.

It seemed to me that a big factor in their success or otherwise was their degree of openness to the new teaching situation. Teacher D was the least happy in the new situation. It was interesting that her points of reference lay chiefly in the past. For instance her view of what to do in the classroom was strongly influenced by the teaching she had had. She felt depressed and defeated by the management challenges posed by the diversity of the learners. Teacher E and Teacher C at the other end of the spectrum enjoyed the new challenges and used cooperative methods of teaching. Both were tuned into the needs of their diverse learners. Teacher E, for instance, always made what she wanted of the learners very clear and allowed the African learners to use their mother tongue during group discussions. Teacher C, on the other hand used a variety of methods with a strong emphasis on group work. She enjoyed solving problems and embraced the challenges diversity presented. Discussion, problem-solving and interaction characterised her classes. Teachers A and B took up the middle ground. Although their approach to teaching was conservative, but they were both empathetic teachers who understood the effect that home environment had on their learners. It is interesting that having a similar background to the 'new' learners, as was the case with Teacher D does not necessarily make it easier to understand their behaviour (cf Sleeter, 2001:106).

In general teachers are trying really hard to meet the challenges they face in their classrooms, but with varying success. The difference in the way in which these teachers experience teaching seems to relate directly to their beliefs as was suggested in the literature study (cf Kagan, 1992; Chavey, O'Donnell & Gallegos, 1994). What seems necessary as a first step is for teachers to find ways to become conscious of their beliefs and allow them to reflect on them in a non-threatening situation (Sleeter, 2001:100). Without this awareness, it seems unlikely that the transformation required for teachers to implement appropriate education and engage in a curriculum relevant to all learners will occur (Bennett, 1995:259). Or as (Cabello and Burstein, 1995:292) argue, 'Teachers need to reflect on their beliefs and how these affect teaching practices rather than to assume or to stereotype when encountering students culturally, racially or otherwise different from themselves'.

Two further factors which impinge on the teaching situation are gender and race. As we saw, Teacher D had difficulty with the Afrikaans learners and there was clear evidence that learners behaved somewhat better when a male teacher was in charge. In addition, overcrowding and lack of suitable materials affected the climate in the class and consequently the lived experience of the teachers concerned.

5.3.2   Findings in respect of the second aim
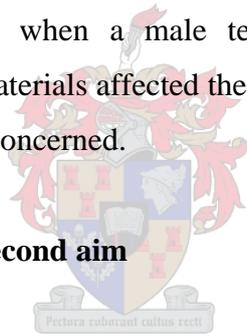
The second research aim was to describe some of the challenges posed by a change in the LoLT and how it affects the work of teachers in a particular multilingual setting.

In the school where the study was done, Afrikaans and English are used as parallel LoLTs. Afrikaans continues to be used because the majority of the learners are Afrikaans speaking. With the change in the school population, English is used as a parallel LoLT to cater for learners from the different cultural groups. As established in the first chapter, English was adopted because it was popularly seen as the preferred language of communication where teachers are not equipped to use African languages.

This means that the Afrikaans learners no longer have their classes exclusively in Afrikaans. In addition English is a second, third and even a fourth language to some of the learners, so the learning process is further constrained. Teachers are faced with the complex challenge of motivating the learners and mediating learning.

At this school, teachers have different approaches to having to teach in both English and Afrikaans. As can be seen from some of the teachers' responses, parallel medium classes are hard on learners whose Afrikaans is limited. It is also hard on the teachers, involving extra preparation. (Teachers see the extra preparation as a burden and in one case at least have refused to do the extra preparation.) Sometimes, because they are more at home in Afrikaans, they forget to switch to English. It is clear that although the teachers involved have different levels of facility, they lack the techniques that would make it possible to use two or more languages really effectively and for learners to have the real benefit of multilingual education (see Genesee, 1995: 205; August & Hakuta, 1997: 52). The current approach is to separate or group the learners along language lines or to alternate between Afrikaans and English in unsystematic ways.

One of the ways in which the need for new skills was highlighted is Teacher A's earnest but lacklustre teaching to the English speakers whom he perceived as deficient in language ability. His seemingly cold and impersonal style and the strong use of repetition were among the factors that affected the climate in the classroom: students were reluctant to participate. This can be constrasted with Teacher E (see above) who was able to encourage strong interaction.

5.4   REFLECTIVE CONCLUSIONS

It is obviously not possible to make generalisations on the basis of this study. However, it is possible to suggest implications.

5.4.1   Implications for teacher education

The first implication is that all prospective teachers who have received their schooling and qualified at monocultural education institutions should be provided with opportunities to increase their knowledge of how to operate successfully within a multilingual education context. The ideal is that all teacher education subjects and courses should be "multicultural" in nature, which implies an integrated approach to the design and development of such courses (Hood & Parker, 1994; Cabello & Berstein, 1995). However since very few teacher education programmes are at present geared towards multicultural teaching and learning situations, compulsory modules on multilingual education should be included in certificate or

degree teacher education programmes. This should, of course, include attention to multicultural aspects. At the postgraduate level, for instance in BEd (Hons) programmes, students should have the opportunity to specialise in multilingual/multicultural education.

The following list reflects areas of development or training that the study, including the literature review (cf 2.4.1), suggests that prospective teachers would benefit from:

- The role of personal beliefs and their effect on teaching practice;
- The potential richness multicultural education offers;
- Language acquisition, bilingual education, and mediation of concepts and content in a multilingual environment.
- Learning through the medium of a foreign language;
- Ways of accommodating diverse learning styles;
- The selection, development and adaptation of suitable instructional materials for the multicultural classroom;
- The creation of a classroom environment which encourages interaction.

Future teachers need the insight and competence to enable them to engage in reflexive teaching so they can exploit the advantages of a multilingual environment. They would then be in a better position to meet the needs of diverse learners.

5.4.2 Implications for in-service teacher development

At the school that formed the basis of the study, opportunities for teacher development within the school were not being exploited. Younger teachers were not enjoying the benefit of the experience of their more experienced colleagues and the older colleagues were not using the opportunity to learn about OBE from their younger colleagues. During subject or staff meetings of teachers, teaching-learning models which are applicable to teaching multilingual/multicultural groups can be discussed. Sources such as videos or journal articles could be used. This would encourage teachers to share their experiences or particular difficulties and learn from one another. Gore (1993: 99) suggests that parents and even teachers should be included in the dialogical interactions.

There should be local and global networking communication of teachers as a means of raising their performance as teachers in the multilingual/multicultural situation (Harrington & Hathaway, 1995: 275). Through networking teachers will be able to determine the essential needs, critical issues and problems in their various classrooms and thus enhance the quality of learning.

In-service development courses should include opportunities for creative inputs from practising educators, especially regarding the selection, adaptation and development of appropriate instructional material.

Perhaps an even more aspect that in-service development programmes could address is ways of changing teachers' perceptions of black learners. In this study, it seemed that there was a perception by teachers that black learners would not cope. Teachers need to develop ways of recognising that cultural differences are not indicators of lesser academic potential. They also need to be able to accommodate learning styles, behaviour and preferences and understand differences in performance. A further obvious implication is as Dicker suggests that they would be able to create learning experiences that would accommodate a wide range of cultural differences. Although as Pajares (1992: 43) suggests, change takes time, in-service (both school and regional) could encourage this development.
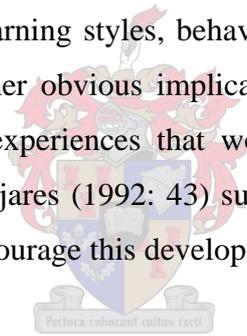
This study has convinced me that Sleeter (2001:100) is right that a necessary first step is find ways to make them conscious of their beliefs and allow them to reflect on them in a non-threatening situation. As Bennet (1995: 259) puts it, without this awareness, it seems unlikely that the transformation required for teachers to implement appropriate education and engage in a curriculum relevant to all learners will occur or that they will develop greater flexibility.

5.5   FUTURE RESEARCH

During the course of this assignment I have become aware of many areas of concern regarding the conceptualization and implementation of multilingual education which urgently require attention, particularly in the South African context. Many of these areas: cultural pluralism, teacher intolerance, eradication of stereotypes, in-service training and prejudices could only be touched upon in the study. They, however, require in-depth research. Further

studies would be necessary to see how representative the findings in this study are. Tackling research on the areas mentioned is particularly urgent in South Africa, as the country is undergoing changes in virtually all spheres of education.

Another area that also needs research is more dynamic ways of meeting the challenges of the multilingual/multicultural classroom. We know the multilingual class poses challenges and we have identified many of these, but we need to do more to explore and develop possible strategies to meet these challenges.

In this research study, the lived experiences of teachers in the multilingual/multicultural classroom were regarded as the cornerstones for improvement and development. Arguably, though, it is not only the teachers who form part of the school system. If we want to have a fuller picture, the research should also be directed to learners to find out how they experience the multilingual/multicultural classroom.

6.   CONCLUSION

Within the context of the South African educational system, the teachers need to embrace the variety and richness of the multilingual classroom and its concomitant multicultural treasures. If teachers could become more accepting of all the children in these classes, they would be in a better position to transform the learning environment and establish and maintain a positive learning culture. I believe too this has direct implications for teacher education programmes and for leadership at school level.

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ADDENDUM A

LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

57 Park Street
Promosa
POTCHEFSTROOM
2531

Dear ……………………………………..

I am a Master's student in Leadership in Education conducting a research. My interest is to find out how teachers experience the multilingual/multicultural classroom. Your name was randomly chosen from amongst the names of our colleagues.

Four other colleagues were also randomly selected. The aim is to interview two male and three female educators, with different age groups.

The time involved in an interview is approximately 40 minutes. I promise to keep the information you share to me confidential and all participants are requested to select pseudonym by which you can be referred to in the research to preserve your anonymity. You will be contacted for a convenient interview, time and place. You may choose the language you are most comfortable with for the interview. Any questions you may have I will gladly discuss with you. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

I shall be grateful if you are willing to join in on this project and look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely

LF TEMANIE

LETTER OF REQUEST TO PRINCIPAL

<div align="right">

57 Park Street
Promosa
POTCHEFSTROOM
2531
21 August 2001

</div>

The Principal
Promosa Secondary School
P O Box 9007
PROMOSA
2531

Dear Sir

This letter is to request permission to interview you and some of the educators at the school.

I am conducting a qualitative research study at school. The study focuses on the lived experiences of teachers in the multilingual/multicultural classroom. Theoretically and conceptually, it is believed that teachers can transform the classroom in the multilingual/multicultural set-up, but little is known about their experiences in the classroom.

In order to get the information for this study, teachers' participation and co-operation at Promosa Secondary School is needed. Their opinions and experiences are required to assist in obtaining quality, valid and reliable data, which will help in preparing our country, education and the state for the future.

Ethica and confidentiality will be considered in the interviews and study report.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

LF TEMANIE

ADDENDUM C

LETTER OF REQUEST TO CIRCUIT MANAGER

57 Park Street
Promosa
POTCHEFSTROOM
2531
18 January 2004

The Circuit Manager
Mr TS Meraba
The Department of Education
P O Box 119
POTCHEFSTROOM
2530

Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I hereby request permission to conduct research at Promosa Secondary School.

The empirical research study deals with the lived experiences of teacher in the multilingual/multicultural classroom. I will interview the Principal, together with five teachers who were randomly chosen. T have a fuller picture, I will also enter their classrooms to observe for myself.
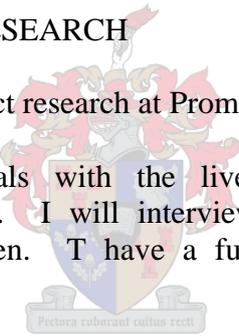
No information will be withheld from the Department, if requested from the Department.

I hope that the request will be considered.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

LF TEMANIE

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I hereby consent to participate in the following research project:

The nature of the project

The project is part of Master's research dealing with teachers lived experiences in the multilingual/multicultural classroom.

The researcher

The researcher is Mr LF Temanie, educator at Promosa Secondary School, who is a student at the University of Stellenbosch.

The nature of participation in the project

I am fully aware and understand the following aspects and the implications thereof:

(i)   That my participation lies in the granting of an interview in which I supply information about myself and the learners;

(ii)   That this interview will be taped on audio cassette, and that I may listen to this tape, if I choose to do so;

(iii)   That I am free to refuse to answer particular questions;

(iv)   That this information taped on a cassette, is part of the research material of the project; and that the researcher may quote and interpret certain parts of the interview, in the light of the rest of the project; and

(v)   That the researcher guarantees that my identity will be treated as confidential at all times, and that this will at no stage be disclosed in reports emanating from this research.

Joint declaration

We, the participant and the researcher, fully understand the above information and implications thereof.


Signed this ……..… day of ………...…………….. 2001, at ……………………………….

…………………………………………   …………………………………………

Research participant   **Researcher**

ADDENDUM E

INTERVIEW WITH EDUCATORS

1.   How would you describe your management?

2.   What do you believe are your strengths and weaknesses?

3.   What leadership skills do you demonstrate in the classroom?

4.   How do you prepare your lessons for the multilingual/multicultural classroom?

5.   How do you deal with learners who show lack of commitment and motivation?

6.   How do you feel about speaking fifty per cent English and fifty per cent Afrikaans during the lessons?

7.   Is the department doing enough in terms of providing support for teachers?

8.   What approach do you find effective for the multilingual/multicultural class?

9.   How do you see the future of the multilingual/multicultural classroom?

10.   What can be done to prepare teachers more effectively for the multilingual/multi-cultural classroom?
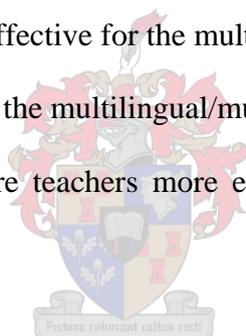
ADDENDUM F

INTERVIEW WITH THE PRINCIPAL

1. How do you relate to the staff members?

2. What do you believe are your strengths and weaknesses?

3. What leadership skill do you believe you often demonstrate?

4. Who ignores your instructions? What could be the reason? How do you deal with it?

5. How would you describe your management?

6. What do you think of the multilingual/multicultural classroom?

7. How has the multilingual/multicultural class changed the school?

8. What do you see as challenges for teachers?
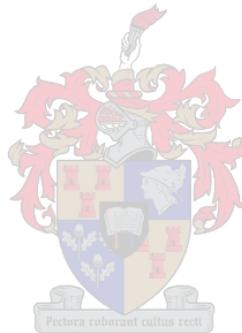
OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Observation	Description
1. Who is in the scene?	How many educators present? What is their gender?
2. What is happening here?	Response
(a) How do the educator and learners interact?	Reaction Expression
3. How do they behave?	Approach
(a) How does the educator deal with learner behaviour?	reaction?
4. What action do they take?	Performance
(a) Why do educators act the way they do?	Conduct
(b) What informs their actions?	Reaction Approach
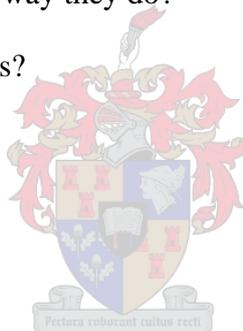
**AN EXCERPT FROM INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS:
INTERVIEW ONE**

Thank you very much that you have decided to participate in this research project. Thank you for your precious time and your experience that you will share with me. I would like to assure you of confidentiality and that you can listen to the tape at any time if you so wishes. I ask that you should be at ease and answer the questions to the best of your ability. You can at any time ask for a break if the need arises, the questions will be asked in the language of you preference.

[Questions in italics, answers in normal font]

Interview one

How do you relate to the staff?
I relate very well to them, but I cannot tolerate any nonsense coming from them. I am able to say what is on my mind. It is important to respect people that you are working with. By doing this you always bring the best out of them.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?
I don't like to blow my own horn, but I believe I am a motivator. I can keep people focused and I have the ability to delegate. I am a very positive person and I am a visionary as well. Of course my weak points, I know that I'm quick tempered. I am moody sometimes and even impatient.

What leadership skill do you often demonstrate when it comes to your staff?
I am an assertive person. It is always important to be assertive, because I'm working with different people all the time. Nobody is the same, so you have to treat people at their own merit. Human relations are very important for a man in my position. I'm working with the community, teachers, NGO's, lecturers from universities, officials from the department and other principals. It is therefore important to have sound and personal relationships.

Who ignores your instructions, what could be the reason and how do you deal with those people?
Of course, there are always black sheep and as a result there are always a few people and I have difficulty motivating these people to do anything. The reason why I think they show this behaviour is because of the promotional posts. They applied and didn't match the criteria. Even since that time they have had a change of attitude. I haven't found the way as yet of successfully dealing with this problem.

How do you describe your management?
I will not say that I am a good manager, because there will always be something lacking. But I manage, I manage to keep the school afloat. For the moment it is working for me. My management style has produced transparency, teacher involvement and accountability.

What do you think of the multilingual/multicultural classroom that our school reflects?

This is a challenge that needs time and patience. Being multilingual adds to the flavour of the school and it makes every day worthwhile. I am in a fortunate position, because I can speak Afrikaans, English, Twana, Suthu and Xhosa. Multilingualism is here to stay, so we have to find a strategy of making it work.

Thank you for that answer. Now how has that multilingual/multicultural classroom changed this school?
There are obvious reasons. The increase in learner enrolment – it has also changed to whole culture of our school. Learners have become aware of other cultures and customs and this is good for our country. Learners are now in the fortunate position to learn from each other. It also has had an effect on teachers. They have had to make certain alterations and adaptations. They have to prepare there lesson in both English and Afrikaans. They have to accommodate other cultures, religions and races as well.

What to you see as challenges for teachers in the multilingual/multicultural setup?
They have to accept the difference in linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The preparation of lessons should be in both Afrikaans and English. They have to keep all learners motivated. They have to find or put a system in place to deal with learners who struggle with school work and studies. They have to master terminology and concepts. They have to find remedies for stress-related situations. They also have to deal with the very issue of multilingualism and multicultural situations in there classrooms.

Thank you for your time and the information that you shared with us. We find this very fruitful. Thank you once again.