THE LINK BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND AN OPTIMAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN A MASERU SCHOOL

By

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I, Phaello Olivia Malataliana, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my original work and I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it in any institution of higher learning for a degree.

Signature--------------------------  Date----------------------------------
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SUMMARY

Whenever two or more people from different cultures interact in an educational environment, learning and teaching can be affected either positively or negatively. The study sought to establish the link between intercultural differences and optimal teaching and learning environments. The aim of the study was therefore to enhance teaching and learning environments through improved intercultural understanding.

The research was based on the qualitative approach. The research design that was used in the execution of the study was a case study. The data collection methods that were used were focus group discussions, interviews and observation.

The study found that there are some intercultural experiences that either enhance or inhibit educational equality and quality. These are medium of instruction (English Language), availability and accessibility of learning resources and parental support. It was also concluded that acts of discrimination alone cannot affect the performance of learners but, rather, a combination of other intercultural influences play a role.

Moreover, the study found that language can be used as a tool to promote respect for humanity as it was singled out as one of the factors that inhibit respect for others. In promoting tolerance towards each other, the study found that negative self-esteem, seen mostly with the underprivileged learners, affects negatively their ability in tolerating each other. In addition, encouraging participation of learners in sport and group activities emerged as some of the pursuits that can promote tolerance amongst learners from different cultural backgrounds.

The strategies to enhance optimal teaching and learning that were revealed by the study are: repetition of lessons by teachers; motivating and appreciating learners; monitoring classroom dynamics; creating social clubs; training teachers on cultural diversity (inclusive of communication); acknowledging, valuing and celebrating cultural differences; declaring English as an elective subject; unlimited access to the internet and library; and promoting parental involvement in the education of their children.
Key words: intercultural education, multicultural education, interculturalism, multiculturalism, barriers to learning, optimal teaching and learning.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Lesotho is located in the southern part of Africa and has a population of 2 million (2004 census). The census suggests that most of the inhabitants are Basotho (99.7%). For this reason Lesotho has always been described as culturally homogeneous. However, since the first democratic government was instituted in 1993, the homogeneity has changed due to an increase in the influx of foreigners (Moerane, 2008:15). This influx has not left Lesotho’s schools unaffected. According to Mokoteli (2007:59) the status quo recently in the schools is that out of 10 teachers 2 are foreign and out of 20 learners 3 are foreign.

According to Hogan (2007:213), there are degrees of cultural differences in all groups and these are more eminent in diverse cultures. Cultural diversity poses a lot of challenges to both the learners and teachers. Language as a learning barrier, stereotypes, prejudices, biases and cultural misunderstandings are some of the problems encountered by them. Nieto (2002:38) argues that learners from the dominant culture need intercultural education more than others because they are generally the most poorly educated about diversity.

Beaven, Calderisi and Tantral (1998:1) state that some of the factors that come to the forefront in examining high failure rates of Asian students in American schools are the differing communication styles and varied foreign accents. Nieto (2002:58) maintains that culture and cognition cannot be separated. This implies that cultural backgrounds and experiences of learners should always be considered in the provision of education. However, in the case of Lesotho, where the perception has always been that of cultural homogeneity of the learner population, the teachers are not fully equipped to deal with diverse learner populations. This is a huge barrier to achieving successful educational outcomes.

Article 29(c) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child article 29(c) states that “the state agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living; the country from which he may originate and
civilizations different from his or her own.” Lesotho, as a member of the United Nations, has ratified the treaty. It is therefore compelled to ensure that all children in the country are provided with education which takes into account their cultural background.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As an educator, the researcher feels that the right to education of Lesotho’s learners as enacted in the country’s Constitution and in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will not be realised in the long run if the intercultural differences in the schools are not improved through addressing the perception that the learner population is homogeneous. For this reason I decided to embark on this study.

I believe that this study will provide the basis for all educational stakeholders in Lesotho to collaborate to confront the diversity phenomenon, which will undoubtedly impact on the education system in the long run. It is anticipated that this study will also bring to the light the fact that the children in Lesotho’s schools need to be empowered by developing the art of approaching people who are different, communicating effectively with diverse people and living in harmony with all people, regardless of their cultural background.

The main problem that this study will address is that teachers and learners from different cultures do not always experience each other positively due to their cultural differences and that this could inhibit optimal learning.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The need for an exploration and analysis of Lesotho’s education system has become apparent because of the challenges it is faced with since the inception of the first democratic government. The change in the demographic structure of Lesotho’s schools due to high influx of foreign learners is a major challenge in effective education policy implementation. However, the central issue has been that teachers lack skills in dealing with this situation. It is intended, therefore, that the study will make a huge contribution towards addressing changes that need to be made. I also
believe the study will act as a medium of communication for the minority groups amongst Lesotho’s learners who might not have the platform to air their concerns.

Through this study, Lesotho will have the opportunity to learn from other countries’ experience of addressing the issue. The study will also aid in the development of an intercultural policy and, eventually, it is anticipated that the curriculum will be designed in such a way that Lesotho’s learners are empowered and therefore able to work effectively in intercultural situations.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There will be one research question, namely;

How do the perceptions of teachers and learners from different cultural experiences inhibit optimal learning?

In order to answer the research question the following sub-questions will be addressed;

- To what extent do the intercultural differences between teachers and learners, learners and learners and between teachers and teachers inhibit the learning environment?
- What strategies can be put in place to turn these intercultural experiences into positive learning enhancing experiences?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to enhance the teaching and learning environment through improved intercultural understanding. The objectives are;

- To determine the extent to which intercultural differences between teachers and learners, learners and learners and between teachers and teachers inhibit the learning environment.
- To identify strategies that would turn these intercultural experiences into positive learning enhancing experiences.
Globally, in-depth research has been done in the field of intercultural education and a number of definitions have been laid out.

According to Cushner, McClelland and Safford (1992:15) the cornerstone for intercultural education is equity or equal opportunities for all learners. Woodrow, Verma, Rocha Trindade, Campari and Bagley (1997:20) assert that intercultural education is considered as the best and most suitable methodological strategy when dealing with the plurality of cultures that coexist within a social context. They further maintain that amongst the guidelines for intercultural policies is the provision of equal opportunities for basic education for children. Ulvhammar (1984:18) reiterates that intercultural education, “being a form of intellectual and moral training, gives the child an opportunity of getting to know himself as the person and individual”.

Lenihan (2008:6) uses a definition from the Ireland National Council for Curriculum and Assessment for intercultural education which, states that intercultural education is that education which “respects, collaborates and recognises the normality of diversity in all parts of human life and promotes equity and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equity is built”. This definition suggests that intercultural education is for all, irrespective of nationality. Ulvhammar (1984:15) is of the opinion that important tasks of intercultural education are the prevention of racial prejudice and the promotion of better understanding of different cultures.

A United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006) guideline on intercultural education states that “intercultural education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a human rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)”. The organization further maintains that language of instruction and language teaching is crucial elements of effective intercultural education and the promotion of respect for children’s human rights. This point can be summed up by the notion that the language of instruction should be the language that can foster the learning (use of mother tongue) and not impede the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

In analysing these definitions, there are common features in all of them. These are quality education for all, human rights promotion and social justice, appreciation of the diverse societies
we live in and seeing diversity as a source of enrichment rather than a hindrance to peaceful existence.

1.6 OBSTACLES ANTICIPATED

The researcher anticipates that it will not be easy to get access to the school to conduct the study, bearing in mind the fact that this kind of study is very rare in Lesotho because of the belief that school populations are culturally homogeneous. Also, taking into consideration that the researcher is a full time teacher, it might be difficult to schedule convenient time for data collection which will not clash with lessons the researcher’s own lesson timetable. In some instances a language barrier is foreseen, especially with those who do not speak English. Furthermore, the researcher anticipates that the minority groups (foreigners) will not be sufficiently comfortable to give accurate data as the researcher is a Lesotho national.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of the study is intercultural education. In order to understand the basis of the study, it will be necessary to clarify the concept of intercultural education as it has developed over time. Then the report will present to the reader a review of the barriers to optimal teaching and learning and, lastly, consideration will be given to ways to enhance the teaching and learning environment through improved intercultural understanding as presented in the literature.

1.7.1 Intercultural education

In his discussion paper on goals, opportunities and methods of intercultural education, Ulyhammar (1984:57), from the Commission on Migrants Languages and Culture in School and Adult Education in Sweden, argues that intercultural education is an old phenomenon which came into being post World War II. At that time the issue was education of migrants. He suggests that it was during the 1980s that the term ‘intercultural’ came into being following a symposium held in Italy in May 1982 at which the terms ‘intercultural’ and ‘multicultural’ were
discussed and contrasted. The symposium report states that the Council of Europe used the term ‘multicultural’ to indicate a condition in their societies, whereas ‘intercultural’ referred to action or the need for cooperation between different groups of society (Ulvhammar 1984:58).

Ulvhammar’s (1984) explanation suggests that initially there was an understanding that, due to the high influx of immigrants, the societies were no longer culturally homogeneous. Studies conducted in Sweden, Australia, Belgium, Berlin, Denmark, England, France, Netherlands, Canada, Norway and West Germany suggest that multiculturalism was initially seen as the nature of the societies. These are the countries which experienced the greater influx of foreigners following World War II. However, it was around the late 1980s that most of these countries started to look into education for all learners that advocated for respect and tolerance towards other people hence the birth of the term intercultural education.

Wood and Landry (2008:56) assert that the adoption of interculturalism could be a result of either political or social factors and they give examples of Namibia and South Africa in that regard. There are however some countries which still use the term multicultural as opposed to intercultural and there are also some countries which the terms are being used synonymously.

Wood and Landry (2008:78) maintain that the expression ‘intercultural ‘refers to the notion that intercultural education is, by nature, constructive and also that intercultural society is an objective of any society, whereas multiculturalism evokes the idea of one culture standing next to the other. They suggest that multicultural societies are not necessarily intercultural. Dilg (2003:viii) emphasizes the notion, put forward by Wood and Landry (2008:79), that intercultural education is a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all learners. Educational equity is achieved through intercultural education because it incorporates content, concepts, principles, theories and paradigms from history, and the social and behavioural sciences and is therefore considered to be a ‘metadiscipline’.

In discussions of intercultural education, some authors have used a range of terms synonymously by referring, without distinction to pluralism, multi-ethnic, cross cultural, bi-cultural and human relations (Nieto, 2002:15, Dilg, 2003:IX, Sleeter & Grant 2009:iii). Most of them maintain that all of the definitions have been used to refer to diversity in schools, with regard to language, culture, race, class and gender. The fact of diversity in schools has called for
teacher training to be modelled in such a way that teachers are able to transform the school culture so that learners from diverse groups will experience equal status. This, according to Dilg (2003:ix), also mean that learners need the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to live, interact and make decisions with fellow citizens from different racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious groups.

From all the definitions given above, common features are language, culture, race and gender. Even though some authors have opted to use the terms intercultural and multicultural synonymously, for the purpose of this study the term ‘intercultural education’ will be used solely to mean the inter-relation of cultures within the school setting, in line with the definitions of Wood and Landry (2008:78) and Dilg (2003:vii). In the next section optimal teaching and learning will be looked into and the definitions will be given.

1.7.2 Optimal teaching and learning

Optimal teaching and learning can be defined as the transfer and acquiring of skills in an environment that supports the students’ needs as completely as possible (Wood & Landry 2008:79). This therefore means that teachers have to focus on almost every possible thing that can help to enhance learners’ learning. Hernandez (2008:25) suggests that, in order for optimal teaching and learning to happen, attention should be given to the classroom environment, which should be a social, high quality physical setting where natural learning and motivation is taking place. By the same token, Liem and Mcinerney (2008:15) maintain that enhancing teaching and learning environments are paramount for successful teaching and learning. Nieto (2010:35) is in agreement with the former authors in maintaining that “school conditions and climate, in conjunction with the attitudes and beliefs of educators that undergird that climate, can foster or hinder learning”.

Hernandez (2008:67) suggests five elements that teachers should consider in their quest to provide optimal teaching. These are:

- Connections and sense of belonging where children should always feel comfortable. He uses the term a ‘home like’ environment.
• Flexible space and open ended materials as the more attractive the classroom setting is, the more it appeals to the students for learning.

• Natural materials that engage the senses as it is preferable to provide learners with materials that will provoke their curiosity.

• Provoking wonder, curiosity and intellectual engagement. Teachers need to provide learners with materials that can provoke them to explore, learn and discover.

• Engaging children in symbolic representations, literacy and visual arts. There should be plenty of materials that support children growing in multicultural world.

Liem and McNerney (2008:21) views are not on par with Hardenez’s opinions in that they state that it takes more than presentation of content for optimal learning can occur. They list the factors that they believe can optimize learning, which are: quality teaching staff, engaged in promoting international and multicultural awareness and optimising the benefit of project work for learner academic and social outcomes. They further maintain that the learners’ learning styles also affect their learning ability as they interact with the teacher’s teaching styles.

Harrison (1998a), as cited by Tylee and Mlitt (2000:132), went further in looking at the concept of optimal teaching and learning and developed a model to assist in creating optimal learning. The model, called the S.P.A.C.E. model, has five dimensions as follows:

• Self-affirmation: where the teacher provides learners with feedback as a way of motivating them.

• Personal meaning: the suggestion is that it is only when learners are able to make personal meaning that learning can be optimal.

• Active learning: this suggests that learners are active in their learning if they are intellectually doing something.

• Collaboration: requires that learners are able to collaborate with others in the learning and not view their own learning as isolating.

• Empowerment: where the learners help to shape the learning process and to have control over what they are learning.

In analysing all of the definitions and the model by these authors, it is evident that in order for optimal teaching and learning to take place there are a variety of factors to look into. For the
purpose of this study, though, optimal teaching and learning will be understood to entail the social atmosphere in classrooms and schools, the cultural awareness of learners and teachers, and presence of collaboration where the learners are able to work as a team, where conflicts are dealt with amicably and where personal theories about one another do not impede the teaching and learning.

The next section will look in detail at some of the barriers that impede optimal teaching learning.

1.7.3 Barriers to optimal teaching and learning

According to Dilg (2003:23), a barrier to teaching and learning is that which prevents successful and meaningful participation in classrooms. He mentions four factors that could inhibit learning. These are the use of language (especially to the second language speakers of the learning and teaching), the availability of teaching aids, approaches in teaching and the impact of interpersonal relations on the learning and teaching environment. Hessari and Hill (1999:50) further maintain that factors such as use and availability of teaching aids, the teacher’s presentation (language use and communication style) are pivotal in the delivery of quality education for all. The authors are quick to however stress that the learners’ attitudes and identity, which in turn translate into their self-esteem, also play a vital role in their learning as poor self-esteem is undoubtedly a barrier to learning.

Beaven, Calderisi and Tantral (1998:25), in assessing the barriers to learning experienced by Asian learners in America, point out there are eight barriers to learning which the Asian learners have identified. These are: the extraordinary amount of time they spend preparing for class, the amount of time needed to assimilate a classroom question and formulate a verbal response, the complexity of comprehension problems, problems experienced with an instructor’s classroom presentation, fear of ridicule of their limited language skills, a sense of isolation, difficulty in preparing written assignments and inadequacy of conventional approaches to problem solving.

In addition, Thutong (2003:10), writing from the perspective of South African education states that the objective of education, which is to provide quality education for all learners so that they can reach their full potential, is normally not realized because of the barriers to learning. These can be located within the learner, within the centre of learning and within the broader social, economic and political context. Thutong (2003) further suggests the following as key barriers to
learning and teaching within South African schools: socio-economic barriers, lack of access to basic services, attitudes (of both teachers and learners), inflexible curriculum, poverty and underdevelopment, language and communication, inaccessible and unsafe built environments, lack of parental recognition and involvement, and disability. These barriers are linked to the history of the country (Thutong 2003:10).

Another barrier to learning could be the intercultural differences in multicultural schools. A lot of research has been done to establish the link between academic achievement and intercultural differences of teachers and learners (Banks & Banks 2009:15, Foflonker 2010:27, Nieto 2004:50). Foflonker (2010:50), in her study of the integration of adolescents of immigrant origin into the German education system, reiterates that the majority of those dropping out of school are foreign learners and that this situation is “exacerbated by lack of support that students experience in the German school”. Minority in this instance refers to those learners who are not of the German origin but rather in Germany as migrants. This author maintains that the learners are not supported at school and the parents are not actively involved in the education as the teachers have a perception that the parents are “too shy, have no time or would be embarrassed to participate”. Moreover, she asserts that the learners lack emotional and probably physical support which they do not get either at school or at home. She has this to say about the impact of teachers attitudes towards effective learning:

......low expectations of ethnic minority pupils, this might result in inferior treatment in the classroom by giving them less attention, praise, contact, or resources that they have power to distribute and it is only those learners whose values are congruent with the teacher are most likely to achieve success in the kinds of tasks the teacher sets and are therefore more likely to be rewarded (Foflonker 2010:65).

Marsh (2002:66) is in agreement with Foflonker’s sentiments. He states that “people who perceive themselves to be more effective, more confident and more able to accomplish are people with more positive self-concept” and he states that the scenario is apparent with the whites in the American schools. Research has suggested that there is a link between low self esteem and or negative self concept on the side of the learner and failure (Banks & Banks 2004:15, Nieto 2010:76). An atmosphere where little is expected of a person is not conducive to their success.
Moloi, Morobe and Urwick (2008:10), highlight the following as the barriers to learning: language of instruction, lack of teaching aids, limited teacher and pupil interaction and limited knowledge of the content which is exacerbated by the language of instruction (usually English).

The following part will present the ways to enhance teaching and learning through improved intercultural understanding as suggested by the literature.

1.7.4 Ways to enhance the teaching and learning environment through improved intercultural understanding

If the education system is to promote effective learning and prevent learning breakdown, it is imperative that mechanisms are structured into the system to break down the existing barriers (Beaven et al, 2000:56).

Thutong (2003:19) states that the following mechanisms could be used to counteract learning breakdown: innovative practices for recognizing and accommodating diversity should be adopted; activities that advocate against discrimination and challenge attitudes should be put in place; processes towards the involvement of learners, parents, educators and community members should be devised. In addition, training programmes to equip educators to deal with diverse needs should be accommodated in training institutions and the colleges curriculums be restructured to accommodate diversity.

Foflonker (2010:66) adds to the mechanisms postulated by Thutong by suggesting that teachers play a very vital role in promoting a conducive and safe environment for learning and teaching therefore need to be sensitive or, rather, be sensitized towards the cultures of their learners. She maintains that it is very crucial for teachers to be “cognisant of cultural factors influencing the teaching and learning process”. This therefore means that cultural awareness of the teachers is very important as it could either inhibit or optimize learning.

Dilg (2003:ix) shares the same sentiments as those put forward by Thutong for the South African Department of Basic Education as she maintains that teacher training provided in most higher institutions does not provide teachers with skills to teach in the diverse classroom. She refers to this as the ‘development killing’ of teachers. According to her imperative, teacher training institutions should therefore provide student teachers with skills to teaching diverse classrooms.
Hessari and Hill (1999:154) suggest that teachers should use content from diverse groups when teaching concepts and skills. They should help learners to understand how knowledge in various disciplines is constructed and to develop positive intergroup attitudes and behaviours. Teachers should modify their teaching strategies so that all the learners can learn to their best potential.

Focusing on the learner, Grant and Sleeter (2009:25) are of the opinion that facilitation of identity quests is crucial as it will provide learners with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to understand and to cope with their own ethnic and cultural identities. As a result their attitudes and, in turn, their esteem will be dealt with positively.

Beaven et al (1998:55) put forward some of the mechanisms that they have suggested to Asian learners as classroom-based mechanisms to enhance the teaching and learning environment. They include the teacher’s presentation, which they maintain should accommodate all the learners; the use of classroom teaching aids which will assist the students considerably because they act as cues; frequent quizzes; chapter reviews; special assistance on research papers and a glossary of terms.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the demographic changes in Lesotho society as it will, ultimately, affect the diversity in schools. As more and more foreigners (Indians, Chinese, Ghanaians, Ugandans and Zimbabweans) are emigrating from their own countries to Lesotho because of the global village phenomenon, it is vital to study the impact that the increase in the rate of demographic change is going to have on the country’s schools which for a long time have been culturally homogeneous. With the literature review, the researcher wishes to put forward the view that intercultural and multicultural education is not synonymous. It is therefore vital to be able to distinguish between race and culture which are often taken to mean the same thing, especially in contexts such as South Africa because of the country’s history.
1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section will discuss the research design and the methodology that will be employed in the execution of the study.

1.8.1 Research approach

The research approach that will be used with this study is qualitative. The rationale behind the choice of the approach will be highlighted and supported by literature. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:35) “qualitative research is used to describe what is seen and to come up with or generate new hypotheses and theories” and to challenge the prevailing understandings. In addition they state that the approach is used to build understanding of people’s experiences and to provide an opportunity for them to express their views.

In view of the nature of this study, the researcher concluded that the qualitative approach will be appropriate as it will allow her to interact with the participants, given that the intention is to understand them in their own setting, or world. In addition, because the researcher will be studying a topic that has not been so much researched in Lesotho (because of the existing perception that the country is culturally homogeneous), the approach is best as it is exploratory in nature (Johnson & Christensen 2008:388). It is for these reasons that the researcher chose the qualitative approach as the appropriate methodology for this study.

The qualitative approach is anti-positivistic as it constructs meaning from accounts given research participants of their everyday experiences and perceptions. The researcher is interested in understanding rather than giving explanations. The qualitative study aims to understand social phenomena and how different people interpret them. Thus Patton (2002:117) states that the researcher’s role in a qualitative study is to gain a holistic overview of the context under study in terms of its logic, its arrangements, and its explicit and implicit rules. This view is supported by Badenhorst (2008:23) who suggests that qualitative researchers tend to believe that immersing themselves in the research context is a good way to understand meaning. It is imperative, therefore that the researcher doing qualitative research be wholly involved in the study.

The researcher chose qualitative research because she wanted to get the insight from the teachers and the learners (foreign and local) as to what their cultural experiences are and how these
experiences affect the learning environment. It is crucial to get opinions from both foreign and local teachers and learners so that the researcher can get a deeper understanding with regard to the phenomena. Moreover the researcher wants to get their views with regard to the strategies that can be used to turn any negative experiences into positive learning experiences.

Qualitative research design has the potential to achieve this because it is flexible and information is heard first hand and also because of its participant-research perspective which suggests that both the researcher and the participants are involved and the relationship is not brief. Johnson and Christensen (2008:36) state that qualitative researchers argue that it is important to get close to their objects of study through participant observation so that they can experience for themselves the subjective dimensions of the phenomena they study.

Punch (2009:117) takes the view of Johnson and Christensen further by maintaining that the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors from inside through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding and of suspending preconceptions about the topic under discussion. Furthermore the qualitative approach will be appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to collect data because the researcher is regarded as the instrument of data collection because he/she is in close contact with the participants (Johnson & Christensen 2008:36; Punch 2009:117) Additionally, since the subjects under study are the primary sources in providing information to answer the research questions, the researcher wants to get data expressed in the words of participants in the study. Hence qualitative design will be the best approach to obtain the data for the study.

However, in contrast to its many advantages, the qualitative approach has a number of limitations. One of them is that it can be time consuming to conduct because the researcher needs to get detailed information first hand. Some critics have indicated that it is expensive (Biklen & Bogdan 2003:60; Punch 2009:129) because of the data collection approaches which involves direct interaction with the primary sources of the data. According to Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:55) the main disadvantage of qualitative research is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty because the findings are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or whether they are due to chance. Marshall and Rossman (1999:26) share this opinion and further maintain that because qualitative research
is subjective in nature, procedural problems can arise. In addition an in-depth, comprehensive approach to data gathering limits scope (Punch 2009:55).

1.8.2 Research design: a case study

The research design that will be used for the study is a case study. According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002:27), a case study “is an in depth study of a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organisation, one program and so on”. They further state that the goal of a case study is to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity by engaging a variety of data collection strategies.

Johnson and Christensen (2008:406) are in agreement with Ary et al (2002:100), extending the claim by arguing that case study researchers are interested in the holistic description of how the components of a system work. This includes teachers and learners in a case study of a school. As the researcher will be studying a phenomenon that is little considered in Lesotho the researcher believes a case study is appropriate to give me the in-depth understanding of the situation in the school identified in the sampling strategies to be adopted.

1.8.3 Site

The study will be done in one school in the city of Maseru because the population is largely multicultural, unlike the population in most schools around the city. In addition, the school is accessible to the researcher and the researcher is familiar with most of the teachers in the school which will make the collection of data easier.

There will be 20 learners chosen that will be visited and the selection will take equal females and males in cases where it is possible. The focus group will only be done with foreign learners as it is time consuming. Participants in the focus groups will be the seven foreign learners who will also be used during the interviews. In total there will be 20 learners and 10 teachers (6 Basotho and 4 foreign) from both schools. The teachers are inclusive of the principal and Life Orientation Head of Department as the custodians of the welfare of both learners and teachers at school.

The researcher believes the participant selection processes outlined will provide a variety of opinions (information rich data). The researcher believes that the information obtained from the
twenty learners will be sufficient to generate the theory relevant to the research question. However this number is flexible, in accordance with the principle of saturated sample. Data saturation is defined by Ary et al (2002:430) as “termination of sampling when no new information is forthcoming from new units”. This means that there is redundancy of information with the additional participants in the sample.

### 1.8.4 Sampling strategies

The sample will be selected purposively because the researcher would like to get the insight of learners from different classes (Form A to Form E) and the researcher believe the class teachers will help to choose the learners which they know are likely to be comfortable to share their experiences with the researcher. Johnson and Christensen (2008:239) suggest that purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which the researcher solicits persons with specific characteristics to participate in the research study. It will therefore provide the researcher with information–rich participants.

The way the school have been chosen is that it is more multi-racial than others and is located within Maseru and therefore easily accessible. Also the researcher knows the headmaster so approval to conduct the study will not be a problem.

### 1.8.5 Data collection strategies

According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:201), data collection strategy is the technique for physically obtaining data to be analysed in a research study. They state sources of qualitative data include observations, interviews, phone calls, personal and official documents, photographs, recordings, drawings, email messages and informal conversations. For this study the researcher will use interactive methods (explained in the following paragraph) by obtaining first hand information. The researcher will collect data herself as she believes she will be able to get the holistic picture of the context because she will be fully engaged.

The researcher will use the unstructured interview to allow flexibility. This is especially important when dealing with the junior learners to ensure that they do not feel like they are being interrogated and feel able to share their experiences frankly and openly. The unstructured
interview will also allow the researcher to probe deeper and build rapport, which is essential if the researcher is to get convincing data (Marshall & Rossman 1999:24).

The researcher will also make use of focus groups and observation with the senior students where she can be the facilitator. The researcher believes through use of open-ended questions the learners can share important information which they might not have been able to share during the structured interview. Observation will be used to support the data collected through interviews and focus group sessions. Focus group interviews can help with the in-depth discussion of the phenomenon under study and because it will be conducted with people of the mixed cultural backgrounds they can be able to furnish the researcher with quality information as they will be conducted in a non-threatening environment. However, the researcher is of the opinion that the formation of the groups will not be rigid, this means that the researcher can redo the groups if she feels she is not getting relevant data.

1.8.6 Data analysis and interpretation

According to Biklen and Bogdan (2003:25) qualitative data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the data from interviews, transcripts, field notes and other materials in order to identify the findings. Data analysis involves breaking up data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2008:147) suggest that, because qualitative data is by nature more open to ambiguity, it requires the identification of emergent key themes that have to be organised, collated and interpreted. They further maintain that due to the linguistic or visual nature of the data the role of the researcher in the selection and interpretation of the evidence is crucial to the success and validity of the research.

The data for this study will be organised and analysed as the data collecting progresses because the researcher will be using qualitative research techniques, in which it is important to transform data into information, insights and knowledge. Patton (2002:432) asserts that qualitative analysis transforms data into findings which will involve reducing the volume of raw information through sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals. The data from this study will be analysed
such that it gives a holistic picture of the phenomenon being researched and it will be interpreted according to the research questions forming the basis of the study.

Data interpretation refers to the development of ideas about findings and relating them to the literature and broader concerns (Burton et al, 2008:147). Biklen and Bogdan (2003:55) state that interpretation involves explaining and framing ideas in relation to theory, other scholarship and action as well as showing how research findings are important and making them understandable.

1.8.7 Measures of trustworthiness and credibility

Trustworthiness and credibility measures are designed to ensure the research is objective and follows the ethical requirements. The interviews will be recorded through note taking so that the data collected and to be analyzed is accurate. This is referred to as audit trail (Badenhorst 2008:24). The original documents of the participant interviews, a copy of the interview schedule and the permissions granted to the researcher will be produced for authentication purposes. The researcher will approach the headmaster of the school where the study will be conducted for permission. The participants will also be assured of their anonymity so that they can freely give the information without fear. In addition peer debriefing will be used to ensure credibility of the study. Peer debriefing is defined by Johnson and Christensen (200:436) as the “the discussion of the researchers interpretations and conclusions with other people and the peer has to be sceptical and play the devil’s advocate, challenging the researcher to provide solid evidence for any interpretations”. Ary et al (2002:436) are in agreement with Johnson and Christensen in respect of peer debriefing and they further suggest that, as an inexperienced researcher, the researcher can ask an outside person to critique the findings and or interpretations and point out any bias he may notice.

For this study, the researcher will make use of a variety of instruments to ensure that the results are credible and trustworthy. This is referred to as triangulation (Johnson & Christensen 2008:276) which, in the case of this study, will entail the collecting data through interviews, a focus group and observations.
1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher will approach the headmaster of the school where the study will be conducted to seek permission to do the study (It should be noted that in Lesotho the researcher is not to ask for permission to do the study from the Ministry but from the headmaster/mistress of the target schools.) The participants will be requested to take part in the study and they will be assured that their participation should be voluntary hence if they could feel like quitting in the middle of the interview they will be allowed to do so. The names of the participants will not be mentioned during the analysis and they will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The rules for ethical consideration formulated by the Faculty of Education and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University will also be adhered to.

1.10 PROPOSED DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 will provide an introduction and orientation to the study and justification for the selection of the topic. The research question and sub questions and the research aim and objectives will be presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2 will explores the literature on intercultural differences, factors inhibiting optimal learning and the ways that could be used to improve teaching and learning through improved intercultural understanding.

In Chapter 3 the focus will be on research design and methodology. This will include the research approach, site, sample and sampling strategies and data collection strategies.

Chapter 4 will present the findings and interpretation of the findings.

In Chapter 5 the conclusion and recommendations for further research will be considered.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave an introduction and justification for the study. The aims and objectives were discussed as well as the research methodology that will be employed in the execution of the study. The following chapter will give a detailed discussion of the existing literature on the different aspects of the topic.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present an extensive discussion about intercultural education as presented in the literature. In carrying out this activity, a range of sources were consulted, including books, journals, the internet, dissertations and theses, conference papers and government documents from different countries. This was done with a view to satisfying the notion of getting different views on the phenomena that form the basis of the study and eventually contextualising them.

The terms associated with intercultural education will be defined in detail; some of the terms which are normally used synonymously with intercultural education will be compared and contrasted in order to have a clearer picture of where the term stems from. In addition the evolution of the term will be looked into from three different countries - namely United States of America, United Kingdom and Ireland. The countries were purposefully selected as they have longer experience than Lesotho with multicultural societies and Ireland, in particular, for its well developed and comprehensive intercultural projects.

Furthermore, the barrier to learning will be looked into from an intercultural point of view. Finally, the strategies that have been used in trying to enhance learning in multicultural settings will be discussed.

It should be noted that, even though some of the concepts were clarified in Chapter 1, they will be dealt with in further detail in this chapter and different views will be looked into in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena.
2.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS ASSOCIATED WITH INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

The terms to be clarified in this section are central to the understanding of the term intercultural education. Hence I found it appropriate to elaborate on them. These are culture, culture and learning and establishing a link between culture, language and learning.

2.2.1 Culture

In order to understand intercultural education it is imperative that we establish what culture is and what it entails. It is only then that we can be able to contextualise culture in educational situations. Even though there has been extensive research on culture, the literature has postulated that there is still no consensus as to what culture really are (Hall 2004:15; Banks & Banks 2009:43). In fact, Banks and Banks (2009:10) declare openly that “culture is one of the most difficult concepts in human and social sciences and there are many different ways of defining it”. The result is that authors normally look at culture from their point of view at a particular point in time. It is therefore with this notion in mind that some of the definitions of culture will be looked into, following which the definition will be determined for the purpose of this study.

According to Hall (2004:45) who is regarded as one of the experts of cultural studies, culture is “the shared values of a group or society and it is what distinguishes the human element in social life from what is simply biologically driven”. However he immediately questions the notion of “shared meanings” as it may make culture to be too “unitary and too cognitive”. Hence he states that culture is also about feelings, attachments and emotions as well as concepts and ideas.

Banks and Banks (2009:25) are in agreement with Hall in that they maintain that “culture can be thought as construction (as) it constructs us and we construct it that is, all thoughts, feelings and human activity are not simply natural but the result of historical and personal experiences that become sediment as culture in habit”.

Martinez, Reagan and Cordeiro (2000:2) state that culture includes the patterns of knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs produced by a human society and transmitted from one generation to another. It also includes behavioural norms, learning styles, and gender roles,
views of the family and kinship patterns. This definition goes further than those previously discussed as it also includes some traits found in educational settings.

Nieto (2010:78) writes that everyone has a culture because all people engage in the world through social and political relationships informed by history as well as by race, ethnicity, language, social class, gender, sexual orientation and other circumstances related to identity. Banks and Banks (2009:55) are in agreement with Nieto but they suggest that we should not be led astray as culture varies from one person to another due to “the subjective world”. Nieto (2010:80) adds to this notion by suggesting that there is no such thing as pure culture because cultures influence one another.

From the definitions, it is evident that culture covers a ray of factors. These include thoughts, attitudes, emotions, beliefs (which are a result of historical and personal experiences), learning styles, and language and gender roles. Additionally, it is transmitted from one generation to the next. The definitions also made clear that culture is constructed, which means that one can be born in one culture and die in another culture. Athiemoolam (2002:76) emphasises this point by conceding that “it is important to note, however, that the concept of “shared” means that individual’s members of a community can vary greatly in thoughts, feelings and behaviours yet hold in common the understanding of symbols and representations through which they communicate”.

For the purpose of this study culture will include beliefs, attitudes, language and thoughts about the world. Having defined culture, it is appropriate to make a link between culture and learning, as a way of contextualising culture.

### 2.2.2 Culture and learning

According to Le Roux (2001:1) “instruction and learning are socially determined activities where social forces such as cultural sentiments, social feelings, classroom atmosphere, prejudice and stereotyping, interpersonal relations and expectations as well as the reflection of social reality in subject matter all have significant influence on the effectiveness of teaching and learning”. Banks and Banks (2009:10) are undoubtedly in agreement with Le Roux as they maintain that everything in education relates to culture, “its acquisition, transmission and invention”. They further maintain that culture shapes, and is shaped by, the learning and teaching that happen
during the practical conduct of daily life, in families, in school classrooms, in community settings and in the work place.

What Banks and Banks are bringing to our attention is the vast influence hidden curriculum has, although it is normally not taken into consideration despite the evidence that it does shape an individual. Hidden curriculum is defined by Wyngaart (1994:15) as a side effect of an education or lessons which are not openly intended such as the transmission of norms, values and beliefs conveyed in the classroom and the social environment. Besides these notions, Hall (2004:56) expands on the former comments and suggest that in order for members of the same culture to share ideas and express themselves, “language is the privileged media through which can happen”.

From these sentiments, it can be deduced that to divorce culture from learning is implausible as it is evident that culture influences learning. This goes back to the definition of Nieto which included learning styles. Hall (2004:67) is of the opinion that language is central to meaning and it relates to the learning and teaching spheres.

The question that follows is: What happens in cases where there is language difference between the learner and teacher? Obviously, this means that there will be confusion, misunderstandings, misinterpretations and misrepresentations. Hall (2004:55) demonstrates this by showing that in order for communication of the meanings to happen participants must be able to use the same linguistic codes. This does not necessarily mean speaking “the same language” but rather being able to translate what one is saying into what the other person can understand.

Having deliberated on culture and learning, it seems obvious to make a link between culture, language and learning. This is because language as a distinct element of culture plays a very pivotal role in communication, which is the basis for learning.

**2.2.3 Link between culture, language and learning**

It is imperative to firstly define language so that the importance of this section becomes clear. According to DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004:25), language is “an organised, learned symbol system used to represent human experiences within a geographic or cultural group”. They further strengthen the definition by stating that in its most basic sense a language consists of symbols
which are vocabulary, “and rules which are grammar and syntax so that the speakers are able to manipulate the symbols meaningfully in order to communicate”.

Banks and Banks (2009:297) expand on the former definition by focusing on the major aspects in their definition, which are as follows;

Language is a complex system of communication that includes the following major subsystems: pragmatics (sociolinguistic rules governing language use...), syntax (rules of word order in a sentence); semantics (meanings of words and sentences); morphology (rules of word formation); and phonology (the sound system of a language).

Ovando in Banks (1989:208) is in agreement with the former authors but takes it further by saying that “language as a system of communication linking sound, written or visual symbols, and meaning is an indispensable bridge for accessing knowledge, skills, values and attitudes within and across cultures”. In essence, language has a big influence on the way the members of a certain group perceive and reflect on the world, their thought processes and the lifestyles of the people concerned (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004:25).

In addition to the above, Banks and Banks (2009:15) maintain that language is a symbolic representation of a people and that language is more than speech. Ovando in Banks (1989:209) emphasizes this point by suggesting that language is more than a set of words and grammar rules but is a “forceful instrument for giving individuals, groups, institutions and cultures their identity”. Nieto (2010:89) cements all these definitions by warning that “doing away with a language, or prohibiting its use, tears away at the soul of a people”.

From the definitions that have been considered there are a number of conclusions that can be made. These are:

- Language is a means for communication within and across cultures
- It is a set of symbols comprising vocabulary, grammar or morphology, pragmatics, phonology and syntax
- It is a form of identity amongst a group of people
- It can either be written or visual
It is essential at this juncture to go in detail as to what intercultural communication is before deliberating on the role of intercultural communication within an educational setting.

From the arguments put forward, it is clear that a link can be made between culture, language and learning. The implication for teaching across a variety of cultures is that a need exists to help learners become aware of the role of culture in forming people’s interpretations of self in relation to others and the world around them. As a consequence, they may be more tolerant and vigilant in seeing through different eyes. However, it is evident, according to DeCapua and Wintergrest (2004:28), that “native language impacts on second language learners’ understanding of a second culture, for their conceptualisations of the new culture are greatly affected by the worldviews, beliefs, assumptions and presuppositions of their own culture”.

Following the earlier argument that culture and education are intertwined, it is obvious that language, as an element of culture and form of expression, is the basis for learning and academic achievement. This point is emphasised by Nieto (2010:90) who maintains that a lot of research has been done which has shown that the use of mother tongue in teaching and learning has resulted in better academic performance. She mentions the terms ‘additive’ and ‘subtractive’ bilingual homes where she shows that homes where Spanish continued to be used even after children learned English (additive) significantly outperformed their peers where Spanish was replaced by English (subtractive). The findings suggest that elimination or suppression of native language use at home and school is likely to result in academic failure. In fact Nieto (2010:91) puts it very clearly that the research confirmed that “simply speaking English is not a guarantee that academic success will follow”. Even though the study was done with particular emphasis on English and Spanish, the results apply across board.

Banks and Banks (2009:299) discuss theories which are used in language and learning, including input hypothesis, interactionist theory, basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), instructional methods and approaches and instructional strategies and contexts for learning. These theories explain how language and learning are linked.
2.2.4 Intercultural education

Even though, the term ‘intercultural education’ was defined in Chapter 1, the researcher thought it valuable to give an in-depth explanation at this point as the concept is the focal part of the study. However, it will also be worthwhile to elaborate, compare and contrast multiculturalism, diversity and interculturalism before going into detail about intercultural education. This is necessary because, as has been established, in most of the literature the distinction between these terms is not always clear, which creates confusion. For the purposes of this study, the term will be defined from a variety of sources, including the United Nations and European Union on Intercultural education policy as they are neutral associations.

Intercultural education is defined by the Ireland National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2006:3) as education that has two focal points. Firstly, intercultural education respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all areas of human life. Secondly, it is education that promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equality is built. Foflonker (2010:23) on the other hand suggests that ‘intercultural’ and ‘multicultural’ terms have been used to describe a situation where there is more than one culture in the country. Min Jeong (2008:43) is in agreement with Foflonker but further argues that the description of the society as having more than one culture is not enough but rather how the minority cultures are being treated in any given multicultural society. Min Jeong (2008:43) therefore agrees with the notion that intercultural education tackles more unfair treatment of the minority groups whilst multicultural education describes the society as diverse. Birzea (2003:10) has a very interesting approach to the definition of intercultural education. He states that intercultural learning is more than an encounter with another culture and is more than culture shock. He writes that “intercultural learning is based on the assumption that the fear of the foreign is not a natural destiny and that cultural development has always been a result of an encounter of different cultures”. He emphasises the focus on fear by suggesting that the prefix ‘inter’ means that the fear and historical barriers can be overcome.

The European Union (2008:15) on the other hand states that, “intercultural education is the pedagogic approach aimed at generating a tolerant and sensitive attitude to ethnic, cultural and religious differences between individuals”. The organisation gives what they term a possible
definition of intercultural education, being “education that recognises the fact of linguistic and socio-cultural plurality/diversity at the levels of organisation, curriculum content and teaching methods”. It further takes away the notion that the minority ethnic cultures within the mainstream are a handicap but should rather be seen as an asset and a source of social enrichment (Squelch, as cited by Athiemoolam 2002:54).

Furthermore, UNESCO states that intercultural education is a response to the challenge to provide quality education for all. It is framed within a Human Rights perspective as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 article 26 which reads as follows:

*Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

The Ireland Department of Education and Science (2002:2) sums up the definition of intercultural education in the following manner:

- intercultural education is for all children irrespective of their ethnicity
- intercultural education is for all children irrespective of their age
- language and talk are identified as a fundamental component of intercultural education
- intercultural education happens naturally though the hidden curriculum of the social and visual world within which the child lives
- Intercultural education is concerned with ethnicity and culture and not simply with skin colour.

For the purposes of this study, intercultural education will refer to education for all irrespective of their cultural backgrounds. Intercultural education therefore prepares the learners to be able to live with other cultures in harmony. In addition, it is seen as that education that promotes equality yet appreciating the diversity that exists in societies.
2.2.5 Interculturalism

According to Birzea (2003:7) interculturalism “emphasizes the interactive dimension and the capacity of entities to build common projects, to assume shared responsibilities and to create common entities”. This implies a better understanding of one’s own culture in the light of various reference systems and in addition to knowledge about other cultures.

By the same token, UNESCO (2006:14) suggests that “interculturality is a dynamic concept and refers to evolving relations between cultural groups”. This means that it “presupposes multiculturalism as it results from intercultural exchange and dialogue on the local, regional, national or international level” (UNESCO 2006:15). This however does not just refer to any intercultural exchange but to an equitable exchange which is cemented by mutual respect. The vision of interculturalism is to create intercultural competence in individuals and eradicate ethnocentrism.

2.2.6 Multicultural education

According to Banks (1989:2), multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. They state that it incorporates “the idea that all students regardless of their gender and social class, and their ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics- should have an equal opportunity to learn in school”. It is because of these characteristics that some learners have a better chance to learn in schools as they are currently more structured that learners who belong to other groups or have different cultural characteristics. In their latest edition of the same book, the authors stress the fact that multicultural education must be viewed as an ongoing process and not as something that educators “do” in order to solve the problems that are targets of multicultural education reform.

In Gorski (2010:1) multicultural education is described as a progressive approach for transforming education. It holistically critiques and responds to discriminatory policies and practices in education. Multiculturalism is grounded in social justice and it acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the grounds for the transformation of society and the elimination of injustice.
Some of the authors (Nieto 2010, Banks 1989, Banks & Banks 2009) argue that multicultural education is not a once off strategy but it is ongoing. They contend that the cornerstones of multicultural education are acceptance of diversity and rejection of social injustice and provision of equal opportunities to all.

According to Athiemoolam (2002:88), multicultural education has been subjected to large scale criticism. Attempts to gain recognition for multicultural education have been hampered by confusion and debate over its meaning, as well as its feasibility as a process of facilitating equity in education and society. However, the literature that was reviewed showed that there are no major contradictions between the multicultural scholars.

In contextualising this term, Athiemoolam (2002:89) states that multicultural education will entail the following. Assimilation is rejected: multicultural education is for all children; and cultural diversity is reviewed as an asset to society. Multicultural education acknowledges the rightful existence of all groups. It is recognized as a complex education process and social reform movement, and ideals of non-racialism, democracy and equity are essential to multicultural education. Multicultural education is synonymous with education reform and, in practice, multicultural education requires the total reform of the school environment.

In analysing Athiemoolam’s definition, multicultural education is shown to be for the benefit of all children and simply for minorities. It equips learners to deal with and live in micro- and macro-culture in a harmonious way without their productivity being dampened. It further empowers the learners to be able to detect social injustices and discrimination and have decisive strategies to tackle such occurrences. It should also be noted that multicultural education does not only look at the application of diverse culture but also the total school environment.

According to Nieto (2004:346), multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for 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 reflect. Nieto (2004) further suggests that there are seven basic characteristics of multicultural education which are; antiracist, basic, and important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, is a process and it is lastly a critical pedagogy.
On the basis of the given definitions, there is a great challenge as to whether there is any difference between multicultural and intercultural education. This issue is discussed in the next section.

2.2.7 Multiculturalism

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2006) *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* state that it “describes the culturally diverse nature of human society”. It expands this claim by suggesting that the term also entails not only the ethnic or national culture, but also the linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity. In evaluating the term multiculturalism, Athiemoolam (2002:77) suggests that there are several terms which have been used synonymously with multiculturalism, including “cultural differences, multi-ethnicity and cultural pluralism. However, in contextualising the term, he indicates that multiculturalism would “focus on the acceptance of the pluralistic nature of society with a view to creating greater understanding and inter-ethnic communication among all ethnic communities that constitute society at large”.

According to Birzea (2003:45), multiculturalism is a “descriptive term and it refers to the natural state of society that cannot be diverse, namely multilingual, multilingual, multireligious ... and this meaning stresses the comparative dimension, the co-existence of different entities that may manifest themselves as such in a common public sphere (e.g. in a multicultural society).”

Conversely, Thompson (1995:34) disputed the use of the term multiculturalism, because according to him, the term suggests that societies need to embrace and celebrate the cultural differences without addressing the economic and political inequalities which in his view is very dangerous. He further argues that the term multiculturalism is rarely used by the theorists of multicultural education.

Multiculturalism can therefore be seen as the description of a society which is pluralistic in nature. For the purpose of this study, it will therefore refer to the appreciation of the multicultural society that is in existence.
2.2.8 Are multicultural and intercultural education the same?

As stated earlier, the critiques of the terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural education’ have cited the unclear terminology and lack of conceptual framework (Athiemoolam 2002:23) as their point of attack. It is because it is not clear as to what the differences are, if any, and if there is sufficient call for the differing conceptual frameworks.

Most of the literature (Holm 2009:1, Nieto 2006:17, Hill 2007:100), state that multicultural education and intercultural education are often used as synonyms. However, Holm acknowledges that there are some authors who indicate that there is a difference between the two. Birzea (2003:16) contends that, in our every day wording, the distinction between multicultural and intercultural education is not always clear because both are associated with heavily symbolic ideas such as identities, belonging, affiliation or cultural particularism.

However, the scholars who are for each maintain there is a distinction between the two. Holm (2009:1), in his analysis of the terms, states that the difference between the two is often geographical because in Europe the preferred term is intercultural education while North America (especially the USA), Australia and Asia use the term ‘multicultural education’. However, even in Europe there are differences between countries. For example, in Sweden and Netherlands the term ‘intercultural education’ is used while in Great Britain and Finland ‘multicultural education’ is a commonly used term.

Birzea (2003:15) is in agreement with Holm (2009:20) on the fact that the use of the terms differ from country to country. Birzea (2003:10) maintains that the “differences are valid in a European context. In the USA, Canada and Australia, the term intercultural is rarely used while multicultural is common for both the static situation (diversity) and the interaction resulting from interpersonal encounters (the dynamic or intercultural dimension)”.

In making the differentiation between the terms, the definitions given below should be the point of departure.

According to UNESCO (2006:52), multicultural education is that education that uses learning about other cultures in order to produce acceptance, or at least tolerance, of the other cultures.
Multicultural education strives to achieve developing a sustainable way of living together through creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between different cultural groups.

The researcher acknowledges that the different use of the terms might be geographical. However, for the purpose of this study the definitions of multicultural education and intercultural education provided by UNESCO (2006:52) and Birzea (2003:10) will be the point of departure. Birzea (2003:10) suggests that multicultural education is a more descriptive term which refers to the natural state of society that cannot be diverse, namely multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious. UNESCO’s definition of multiculturalism refers to the composition of the classroom, which is culturally diverse.

In contrast to the above definitions of multicultural education, intercultural education is taken as a more dynamic interaction-oriented concept (UNESCO). Birzea (2003:10) is of the opinion that intercultural education is about the “interactive dimension and the capacity of entities to build common projects, to assume shared responsibilities and to create common identities”. Both of the definitions take it that multicultural education is a creative process.

It cannot be refuted that the use of the terms is to a large extend geographically influenced. However, it is a fact from the review that both multicultural and intercultural education can take different forms yet they can both complement each other though the synonymous use has shown that they bring more confusion.

The following section will discuss in detail the evolution of the term ‘intercultural education’ from the perspective of its use in the USA, Great Britain and Ireland.

2.2.9 Evolution of intercultural education in the United States of America, United Kingdom and The Republic of Ireland

The previous sections have shown that there is no consensus on the usage of the terms ‘intercultural education’ and ‘multicultural education’. It was also stated that geographical aspect plays a role in whichever term is opted for. The section therefore discusses the evolution of the term ‘intercultural education’ from the perspectives of the United States of America, United Kingdom and The Republic of Ireland.
2.2.9.1 United States of America

Most of the literature (Nieto 2010, Banks 1989, Banks & Banks 2009) has shown that intercultural contact is by no means a new era. In fact the literature indicates that people have interacted with others from different cultures throughout history in the course of wars, religious journeys and exchange of goods.

It should be noted, as illustrated in previous sections that in the USA the term that is commonly used is ‘multicultural education’. Hence this report will follow this usage in this section. James Banks is referred to as the father of multicultural education (Athiemoolam 2002:55) and his works will be cited. However, Grant’s (2006:10) detailed description of the evolution of the term is very relevant and will be used as the basis for the discussion in this section.

In his paper *The Evolution of Multicultural Education in the United States of America: A journey for human rights and social justice*, Grant (2006:11) begins by stating that “one effective way to examine the historical development and evolution of multicultural education is to view it as a chain of linked actions (e.g. movements, court decisions, legislations, publications, constitutional mandates, code of conduct) that embrace principles of social justice to support the elimination of poverty, racism, classism and sexism in the United States of America.

Banks (1989:10) report that since World War II many immigrant groups settled in the United States of America and in nations on the European continent (such as Germany and France). These immigrants were mostly from the former colonised countries and there were a lot of reasons for that but the major one was upward social mobility and other economic opportunities. However, they contend that multicultural education “grew out of ferment of the civil rights movement of the 1960s” whose aim was just to eliminate discrimination in societies.

In contrast Grant and Sleeter (2009:66) indicate that there is a chain of actions which gave birth to multicultural education which dates as far back as 1920s. This view is supported by Banks (2004:43) where she reports that the intercultural movement was started in the 1930s and continued into the 1950s. Grant and Sleeter (2009) add that the following movements were major contributors: intercultural education, the intergroup movement, the civil rights movements and the ethnic studies movement. The goal of each movement was to take action for social justice.
and human rights. Each of the movements will be looked into and its contribution to the development of the term ‘multicultural education’ will be illustrated.

2.2.9.1.1 Intercultural education movement

Grant and Sleeter (2009:65) state that the intercultural education movement was the early contributor to the development of multicultural education. This movement provided knowledge about issues of ethnicity, immigration, assimilation, social mobility and prejudice. Banks (2004: 54) asserts that the goal of the intercultural movement was to eliminate discrimination between Afro-Americans and other groups.

Grant and Sleeter (2009:55) emphasise that “many of the ideas learned from the intercultural movement such as tolerance and respect for diversity are included in the current approaches to multicultural education”. It is also from this movement that the advocate’s for multicultural education learned that struggle for acceptance of diversity would face major challenges from within and outside of ethnic and racial groups and that struggle for equity and equality would require hard work and perseverance (Foflonker 2010:16).

According to Banks and Banks (2009: 65), the successive waves of immigrants from 1920 to 1940 changed the social structure of the United States of America and influenced the policy, practice and more general ways of thinking on education that we have today. Such a policy is the National Origins Quota of 1924 which was formulated to address the “hotly contested questions that were before the people living in the USA in the 1920s like “who is an American?” and “who should make up the American society”. Grant and Sleeter (2009:76) are of the opinion that it was during the intercultural movement in the United States of America that schools, settlement houses and newspapers published in the immigrants’ native language were agents of society that welcomed new arrivals and sought to ease their immigration and facilitate their Americanisation.

2.2.9.1.2 Intergroup movement

This is the second movement which emerged in the 1940s. Grant and Sleeter (2009:45) assert that it developed at the end of the World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. They further suggest that World War II brought a reorganisation of American industry because wartime needs require a significant migration of workers to cities. Many of these were black workers from rural
areas. The intergroup movement, more than the intercultural movement, gave direction to ethnic problems that were faced by various groups of people of colour. Pettigrew (2004:44) argues that the two movements brought “an acceleration of debates as assimilation, amalgamation and contact, social and cultural identity that would influence social and education majority-minority policy and further exacerbated the black-white binary in the United States of America”. This, according to Grant and Sleeter (2009:56), led to serious race riots in Detroit in 1944 and it was this intergroup tension that led to research. It was then that universities and colleges developed tools and personnel to reduce prejudice through the study of social science like anthropology and sociology.

Pettigrew (2004:45) argues that the study of social-psychological causes of intergroup tensions led to the development of school curriculum for intergroup tolerance education for students. With that knowledge, understanding and attitudes were transformed. Some of the programmes are significant to some approaches to multicultural education (Grant & Sleeter 2009:65).

2.2.9.1.3 Civil rights movement

The civil rights movement was active in the 1960s and 1970s. Banks (1989:45) suggest that a major goal of this movement was to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations, housing, employment and education. The civil rights movement had a great impact on educational institutions because ethnic or Afro Americans and other groups demanded that schools reform their curricula to cater for their experiences, histories, cultures and perspectives. Banks and Banks (2009:55), in outlining the events of the movement, suggest that the fight included the demand that more brown and black teachers be hired so that the children of minorities would have more successful role models.

Grant and Sleeter (2009:99) are of the opinion that the achievements of the civil rights movement were significant and included court decisions and legislation that sought to eliminate structural inequality in the United States of America. Important decisions include the victory in the Supreme Court case of Brown v Board of Education (1954) which overturned the legal doctrine of “separate but equal” and made segregation illegal: the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 19659 (which restored voting rights to any
eligible citizen); and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 which banned discrimination in the sale or renting of housing.

In addition to these legislative achievements, Banks (1989:4) maintain that another aspect of the response to civil rights movement was hurried courses and programmes which were “developed without careful planning needed to make them educationally sound or to institutionalise them within the educational system”. Following this, further pressure for equity was exerted by a range of other victimised groups, including women and disabled persons, senior citizens and gay persons. Grant and Sleeter (2009:102) support this notion, explaining that even though multicultural education primarily evolved out of the civil rights movement, struggles by other exploited groups for equity and equality played a vital role in the evolvement of multicultural education.

The above discussion of the events illustrates that even though the United States of America uses the term multicultural education, but it should be noted, the same was at some point referred to intercultural education. However, what is highlighted is that there was a chain of events that gave birth to what today is referred to as multicultural education in the United States of America. The main goal was to fight social injustices suffered by minorities. Some discriminatory practices were challenged in the courts of law which resulted in the passing of some legislation.

2.2.9.2 United Kingdom

Athiemoolam (2002:98) asserts that “the United Kingdom was initially not in favour of changing its mono-cultural education approach”. However, this initial perspective was changed on realization that great conflict was created by the marginalization of other groups. The existing mono-cultural education “failed to meet the needs of the myriads of cultural, religious and linguistic groups which constituted society at large (Athiemoolam 2002:99).

As with the United States of America, the United Kingdom experienced an influx of foreigners after World War II. In addition, during the 1960s, the concept of multicultural education was a reaction to the first waves of immigration from colonial countries. This movement was facilitated further by the British Nationality Act of 1948 (Athiemoolam 2002:76). However, Gardner
(2001:35) asserts that it was the post war migration which introduced wide spectrum of diversity into the United Kingdom population.

It was during that time shortly after World War II that the United Kingdom resorted to an assimilations approach, whereby the cultural differences were to be minimised and the English culture reserved. In contrast, Gardner (2001:34) maintains that from the 1960s to 1980, there was a pronounced focus on multicultural education and multicultural policies. These started to disappear in the early 1990s. The National Foundation for Education Research in 1992 argues that the disappearance of such policies was due to the fact that there was an understanding that the political climate was not ideologically receptive to multicultural education and antiracist education.

In 1985, the Education for All committee, led by Lord Swann, reported on the education of young people in a multicultural society. The report concluded that there was underachievement amongst the West Indians as opposed to the White counterparts. This according to the report was the educational needs of the West Indian children were not taken care of as opposed to the their White colleagues. The European Union article on intercultural education in schools suggest that the concepts “intercultural or multicultural education are currently used in British educational policies although there is much emphasis on integration, inclusion and community cohesion”. The report further sheds light on the issue by suggesting that the absence of terminology or language cannot deceive the reality that the Unite Kingdom is a multicultural society, just like most of its European counterparts.

In contrast to the above, Samovar and Porter (2006:24) argue that in 1997, when the New Labour government took over, there seems to have been greater appreciation of issues such as diversity, equality and inclusion. This is supported by the fact that citizenship education has been compulsory in all schools since 2002 and the Education Act of 2006 requires that schools are inclusive and contribute to community cohesion.

The European Union article on Intercultural Education concludes their analysis by stating that there is no educational concept or policy officially labelled “multicultural or intercultural” education. This suggests that there is no political will to support educational equity. Hence, the
report states, some of the universities are dropping some of the modules on multiculturalism and have shifted to focus on inclusiveness and community cohesion.

2.2.9.3 The Republic of Ireland

Ireland is one of the European countries which experienced immigration in recent years. However, the Ireland National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2003:54) argues that it would be inaccurate to suggest that Ireland has only recently experienced diversity because the country would not be where it is, that is economically, if it was not for being part of the global community. The European Union (2008:34) stresses the fact that significant minority ethnic, linguistic and religious groups have long been part of Irish society. The report further suggests that the education system in Ireland was affected by immigration, to the extent that about 10% of primary school learners and 7% of post-primary learners are from over 160 countries.

The terms that were used to describe that state of affairs at schools around 1960 were ‘multicultural’ and ‘intercultural’. However, Samovar and Porter (2006:55) argue that, even though initially both terms were used, at present ‘intercultural education’ is the official term used. It is because Irish society has a belief that intercultural education, as opposed to multicultural education, is valuable to all children in equipping them with skills to participate in a diverse society.

The Republic of Ireland, unlike the United Kingdom, seems to appreciate the diverse society they have become and the contribution made by the immigrants to the development of their country. This is because there is a strong political will to foster intercultural education, as emphasised by President McAleese in 2000 as stated by the Ireland National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2003), who said “the more people….are on the margins the weaker is the centre...we all have a stake in building a future which respects and celebrates diversity-a generous sharing Ireland that encompasses many traditions and cultures and creates space for all its people”.

Ireland’s clear policies, such as the Ireland Department of education and Science Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools (2002), which outlines the aims of intercultural education towards 2016; the Ten Year Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015; the National

In the previous sections, the definitions of different terms central to the study were discussed with reference to different views from different countries. The next section will discuss the factors that affect the optimal teaching and learning environment.

2.3 BARRIERS THAT INHIBIT OPTIMAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Nieto (2010:24) is of the opinion that failure to learn does not develop without basis. Instead “it is scrupulously created through policies, practices, attitudes and beliefs”. A lot of research has been done to establish those factors that can impede optimal learning and teaching (Nieto 2010, Foflonker 2010, Banks & Banks 2009). The factors are social, psychological and cultural. However, since the focus of the study is intercultural education the factors that are discussed relate to cultural aspects.

According to Pretorius (2000:45), there are a range of factors which affect academic achievement of learners. He identifies the following; self-concept, group dynamics, norm and social control, social attraction, expectations, classroom environment, educational milieu, communication, cooperation and competition and dealing with conflict.

2.3.1 Learner’s self concept and teacher’s expectations

Pretorius (2000:45) defines self-concept as a “complicated and dynamic system of perceptions which the individual regards as the truth about himself, where each perception is linked to a concomitant value; self-concept is therefore what an individual believes he is”. What is clear, therefore, is that our thoughts influence our behaviour. Pretorius (2000:65) summarises the notion of self-concept and academic achievement with the following points.

- A learner with a positive self-concept tends to be a top achiever
- A pupil with a negative self-image tends to underachieve
- negative self-concept hampers optimal learning achievement
As this study’s focus is on intercultural education it is appropriate to look at self-concept from the cultural perspective and hence imperative to show how the teacher can affect self-concept of learners. Pretorius (2000:71) suggests that the teacher’s attitudes and perceptions in respect of the learner can have a detrimental influence on the learners’ scholastic success. If the teacher believes that the pupil can achieve, he/she will achieve against all odds but, if the teacher believes the pupil cannot achieve it will influence their learning negatively.

Gardner (2001:56) states that pupils achieve according to expectations communicated to them because communicated expectations influence their self concept, social behaviour, motivation and cognitive style. Gardner (2001) further emphasises that the key to the enhancement of a positive and realistic self concept of a pupil is the teacher’s perceptions of himself and his pupils. Foflonker (2010:45) is in agreement with Pretorius as she suggests that if teachers have low expectations of minority pupils, they tend to give them inferior treatment and this could lead to underachievement.

Banks and Banks (2009:45) give insight to the above statements as they maintain that the teacher’s expectations are related to culture and social class and that teachers are normally influenced by negative information about pupil’s characteristics rather than positive ones. The authors further argue that the teacher’s expectations have an influence on the way they interact and frequency of interactions with pupils. They report that “teachers spend more time interacting with pupils for whom they have higher expectations”.

If the pupil believes he cannot achieve or if the teacher communicates their prediction that the pupil will fail, the pupil can experience anxiety and concern about his incompetence, to the extent that he will not be able to focus on optimal learning achievement (Foflonker 2010:55). Motivation, in the form of praises, usually is granted to those pupils for whom the teachers hold high expectations. Banks and Banks (2009:45) sum this up by arguing that “socially vulnerable children (i.e. younger, lower class and minority) children (are) more susceptible to lower teacher’s expectations”.

All of the issues discussed in this section are summarized in the below figure.

**NEGATIVE SELF CONCEPT**  
**ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Figure 1: Negative Self concept and academic achievement model

(Adapted from Pretorius 2000:55)

### 2.3.2 Group dynamics

Pretorius (2000:54) is of the opinion that every classroom is a social set-up which is mainly experienced emotionally. This plays a very significant role in the achievement of learners because each member of the class is influenced by values, attitudes, leadership and achievement of objectives of the group and by that indefinable feeling which is called “class spirit”. Pretorius further maintains that a class group demonstrates effective dynamics when:

- Learning is actualised adequately
- Teacher and pupils experience positive attitudes in respect of learning experiences
- Interpersonal relationships promote the achievement of group objectives

The effective dynamics described above are usually a challenge to achieve especially in an intercultural situation. Pretorius (2000:54) suggests that there are two interlinked aspects that can be distinguished in group dynamics:

- The way the teacher communicates with learners and, in the process, meets their needs, and
- The interaction which is generated amongst the pupils

Furthermore, it is evident that learners influence each other on affective, cognitive and normative levels by communicating with each other. Pretorius (2000:55) suggests that in a group with high morale and a positive class spirit, even the weaker pupils get inspired to achieve more. However, in a group with low morale and a negative class spirit, even the most willing pupil can become indifferent and an underachiever. He states that the following group dynamics affect learning in classroom situations:

- Informal and formal aspects of the group
• Emotional aspects of a small group
• Group influence on self-image and group influence on intellectual achievement

However, research has shown that the minority groups—even in groups with high morale—tend to achieve less than the majority groups because of their low self-concept which hinders their socialisation in the classroom setting. The teacher’s role is again at the centre of this dynamic as he/she can facilitate or hinder group dynamics. Nieto (2010:65) extends this point by arguing that social relations between learners and teachers and how these relations are internalized by learners are a crucial part of cognitive development. However, it has been established that teacher–teacher, learner–teacher and learner-learner relations in intercultural situations are not always the kind of relations that are considered desirable (Nieto 2010:55).

2.3.3 Classroom climate

According to Pretorius (2000:55), the concept ‘classroom climate’ is used to describe the total sphere of psycho-social relationships and conditions in the classroom”. He further states that every class and school has a unique emotional climate. For example, it might be warm, pleasant and advantageous to learning or, conversely, cold and hostile. Classroom climate is not static but is a dynamic process that encompasses the whole situation of teacher/student and student/student interaction, the class activities to reach the educational objective and the communication styles of those involved.

Pretorius (2000) extends his argument by stating that classroom atmosphere has an important effect on a pupil’s attitude towards the school, on pupil achievement and behaviour, and on reaching the school’s objectives. Johnson (1970) as cited by Pretorius (2000:71) gives the following factors as those which influence classroom atmosphere:

• The personality traits, abilities, motives, values, needs and social experience of those involved
• The norms values views on role and authority applicable to the school
• The school’s academic and social tradition
• The teacher’s competence
• The influence of peers on individual pupils
Nieto (2010:67), in developing the points made by Pretorius, forcefully states that the way learners feel when in class, the way they are treated by their peers and the teacher, and the way they relate to each other play a very critical role in the effectiveness of learning. It is therefore up to the teacher to ensure that he/she creates a positive classroom environment in which learners feel at home so that they can learn to their utmost potential. Pretorius (2000:72) maintains that a positive social climate in class enhances learners feeling of self-worth and learning performance.

2.3.4 Language and communication

Communication is the centre of classroom activity and Bassett and Smythe (1979) as cited by Pretorius (2000:78) sets the stage by stating that “…the reason for bringing pupils and teachers together is the assumption that can best be achieved by interaction….”

In communication it is not only the verbal message that is conveyed. Non-verbal messages which can be communicated through bodily behaviour, body movements, facial expressions, touch, and concept of timing, use of space and voice intonation also play a very important role. It is universally the case that human beings use words to communicate their feelings and ideas. However, Samovar and Porter (2006:33) argue that even though to communicate non-verbally is also universal, the meanings of non-verbal communication systems often shift from culture to culture. It is therefore vital to understand this if communication is to be effective between people of different cultures.

In addition, Pretorius (2000:67) is of the opinion that, since interpersonal communication is emotional, trust and empathy are of paramount importance between the teacher and the student. Miscommunication often happens when the receiver of the message interprets the message differently from the way the sender meant. The teacher must have communication skills which will enhance the learning rather than inhibit it. Samovar and Porter (2006:54); give some examples of non-verbal messages which might lead to miscommunication between different cultures:

- Concept of time: in Mexico and Africa slower pace is valued and in Africa people who try to rush are suspected of cheating. In contrast, in Western countries time is viewed in lineal–spatial terms.
• Touch: in Germany, both women and men shake hands at the outset of every social encounter whereas in the United States of America women seldom shake hands. In Arab culture men greet each other by kissing and hugging. In Thailand people do not touch in public and to touch someone on the head is a major social transgression.

Since classroom is a special and unique communicative context, the teacher who wants to function effectively in this kind of context must have specialised knowledge and skills in respect of interpersonal communication (Pretorius 2000:54). The teacher has to be sensitive and be able to pick up any miscommunication, as this can affect learning in a detrimental way if not looked into carefully. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004:66) assert that knowing what people say verbally may be complemented, supplemented or even compromised by their generally intuitive use of nonverbal behavior. Careful non-verbal communication is crucial for people attempting to communicate effectively in intercultural situations.

Gardner (2001:54) raises points which are similar to those above but suggests that the idea that culture does not influence learning has affected learning to a great extent especially for the minority groups. She maintains that “the refusal to acknowledge the impact of cultural differences on learning may be attributed to factors like reluctance on the part educators to consider culture a determining the learning capabilities of students. Again, learning cannot be divorced from context in which it takes place because “minds do not exist in a vacuum somehow disconnected from and above the messiness of everyday life” (Nieto 2010: 71).

According to Pretorius (2000:66), the following are factors that contribute to the fact that learning is complicated and are influenced by a range of issues:

• Family motifs and identities
• Cultural values
• Ethnic, racial and other identities
• Varying social status
• School based attitudes
• Behaviours and practices
• The relationships between students and their teachers
• Societal ideologies
• Biological differences

This section discussed the factors that inhibit or enhance optimal teaching and the next section will elaborate on the strategies that can be used to enhance learning.

2.4 STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE LEARNING

This section discusses strategies that can be used in the quest to enhance learning, as discussed in the literature. This follows from the discussion of the barriers to learning and suggests some remedies to counteract the barriers. Even though some of the strategies can be applied in a general classroom, they are however very critical in a multicultural classroom.

Some strategies recommended by Athiemoolam (2002:102) are:

• In-service training for teachers
• Greater awareness of intercultural education
• Adopting a curriculum to cater for diverse needs
• The adoption of an antiracist education approach
• Greater departmental involvement, making people feel welcome
• The use of visual aids
• Making use of quotes and quotations from different cultural groups
• Charts in the classroom reflecting multi-ethnicity
• Library exhibitions reflecting ethnic diversity
• Appointment of intercultural staff
• Proactive approach to assisting ethnic groups
• The adoption of a non-discriminatory language policy
• Recognition of other languages during assemblies
• Using drama and music to improve inter-ethnic relationships
• Talks by community leaders
• Strategies to improve community/school relationships
• Sensitising learners to beliefs and cultural practices of others
The development of a school policy on intercultural education
The development of an all inclusive school culture organising social occasions to encourage inter-ethnic mixing
Selection of intercultural prefects
The creation of democratic classroom environment, teaching strategies which enhance inter-ethnic communication and the adoption of an open door policy

Gardner (2001:76) is in agreement with the suggestions put forward by Athiemoolam (2002:105), but adds some suggestions for the characteristics of the successful multicultural schools, as follows;

- Strong leadership on equality issues
- Good community links
- Working with the ‘whole child’
- Clarity of purpose in dealing with racist bullying
- Strategies to avoid exclusions
- High expectations of teachers and pupils
- Clear systems of monitoring progress and targeting resources
- Ethnic monitoring to ensure equality of opportunity

These points form point of reference or, rather, departure for the discussion in the next section as almost all the aspects of teaching and learning have been covered.

2.4.1 Adopting a curriculum that will serve the diverse needs of the learners

This is the most fundamental aspect of intercultural education. This is because intercultural education suggests that learning and teaching become important if learners perceive knowledge to have some relevance to their lives. Athiemoolam (2002:65) maintains that “it is imperative that the formal curriculum gives greater credibility to cultural features of all the ethnic groups that constitute the school” because, without this, native and foreign learners have two contrasting and even conflicting views about the curriculum. In addition, Gardner (2001:54) extends this point by asserting that, for minority learners, the “pupils will either resist the curriculum because it alienates them, or else respond compliantly by going through the motions of learning in order
to meet alternative objectives”. In this regard, Egan (1998:67) asserts that in most cases learning difficulties are seen as learner related rather than system related and this works against the minority learners. He further argues that it is normally the case that minority learners are prepared to accommodate the social practices of the dominant culture while resisting assimilation. Thus even though academic success is present, it is minimal because the system pays little attention to the cultural identity of the minority. Gardner (2001:55) further cites Gibson (1998) who states that

“By pressuring minority students to conform to majority social standards, with all the concomitants of racial prejudice, schools devalue those students’ cultural traditions and contribute to an oppositional climate, a sense of us versus them which can do much to undermine the instructional process. Minority students would accommodate themselves more readily to the formal demands of the school curriculum were identities not challenged in the process...the concept of mainstream...comprehends multiple cultural identities”.

It should be noted however, that in addition to the formal curriculum, reference to curriculum here includes the hidden curriculum, which plays a major role in learning. It is also important because the learners learn from one another and, even though it has little to do with academic aspects of the school, hidden curriculum cannot be undermined because it forms a major part of socialisation of learners. Athiemoolam (2002:60) is of the opinion that a school’s hidden curriculum should also aim to “convey to all pupils that they are all special and unique and that the cultures and religious beliefs they bring to the school form an integral part of the school’s philosophy”.

An appropriate hidden curriculum is promoted by the strategies and methods the school use in dealing with matters relating to multi-ethnicity, which should seek to accommodate all learners regardless of cultural backgrounds. It is also necessary that teachers should make deliberate efforts to ensure that whatever material they use conveys perspectives of all learners and not merely those of the majority. It is through these concerted efforts that the intercultural learner can be developed, with the capacity to be able to learn, live and be productive in intercultural situations. It is only with a curriculum which affirms the individual and collective identities that all learners can thrive.
2.4.2 High expectations of teachers from learners

Gardner (2001:55), in analysing the academic achievement of the minority learners, asks the following question. For a group of learners that were able to progress through an education system that paid little regard to their cultural backgrounds, what was it that enabled them to achieve sufficiently to gain access to higher education? One factor was teacher expectation. All five students recalled that teachers had good or high expectations of them. Foflonker (2010:50) further argues that if teachers have low expectations of the ethnic minority learners that results in their inferior treatment in classroom by giving them less attention, praise, contact or resources that teachers have power to distribute.

Pretorius (2000:68) is of the opinion that expectations go hand in hand with self-concept because, he maintains, “the higher the self-concept, the more favourable the child’s behaviour, which is aimed at self-protection and self-assertion”. The teacher has a very vital role in changing the self-concept of the learners, as this will translate into change in behaviour and performance. Pretorius (2000:68) reminds teachers that every time they communicate with their learners they should be aware that they are communicating those expectations. Pretorius (2000:67) gives the following factors which can support the communication of positive expectations:

- The total class climate, including non-verbal communication
- Feedback: communicated expectations determine the learners response
- Input: the level of expected achievements determines the input given by the learners in the fulfilment of tasks
- Outcome: whether expectations are positive or negative, they serve as encouragement or discouragement

Additionally, Gardner (2001:71) identifies a potential limitation on the points discussed earlier by suggesting that, even though the classroom situation has such vast influence on the learner’s achievements, the expectations of the significant others (like parents and friends) also influence the capability of the pupil as he tends to believe what they believe about him. Pretorius (2000:69) further advises that teachers should have the same realistic and positive expectations of all learners irrespective of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic background.
2.4.3 Creation of a welcoming school and classroom climate

A welcoming school and classroom environment is one of the strategies that can be used to enhance learning especially in a multicultural classroom. However, it is not necessarily obvious how a welcoming environment can be created. Pretorius (2000:70) contends that a positive classroom climate can be created if there is mutual support between one another, including learners and the teacher; if all find each other socially attractive; and if group norms are established to promote learning objectives. Open communication should be actualised, and cooperation should be seen as vital for learning achievement. The onus is therefore upon the teacher to ensure that classroom environment is positive for optimal learning.

Nieto (2010:55) maintains that creating a positive classroom environment—where all learners feel they have good ideas, that they have a right to learn and that they are important and worthwhile—is crucial for learning. She further maintains that creating a welcoming environment is even more crucial especially in a multicultural classroom where the minority learners already feel challenged by various aspects such as language. Pretorius (2000:70) extends on these views as he contends that mere grouping of learners from diverse backgrounds does not necessarily solve problems in respect of social prejudices, stereotyping and ethnocentrism. Rather a teacher “should define his classroom situation is such a manner that optimal learning will flourish in an atmosphere of safety, human dignity, impartiality and spontaneity”. Communication will only be possible if there is mutual trust and acceptance as well as acceptance of different backgrounds and cultures.

Athiemoolam (2002:56) is of the opinion that first impressions last. Hence it is important that there is a clear procedure for receiving and welcoming newcomer learners “whether they are arriving at the beginning of the school year or at the other time and whether they are arriving from a neighbouring school or from half way around the world”. Intimidating or threatening environment where pupils (or even parents) do not feel welcome creates a classroom climate where learners are deemed to fail. Athiemoolam (2002:77) cites Coelho (1998) who suggests the following measures to enable foreigners to feel welcome:

- Create signs and notices in the language of the foreign community(ies) and display them in prominent locations around the school.
• Establish a procedure for welcoming students and parents the moment they arrive
• Designate a team responsible for reception of new learners
• Use the home language of all learners whenever possible
• Allow plenty of time for reception interview
• Conduct an informal interview to ask the necessary questions and complete the registration forms
• Assess the pupils academic background and needs
• Provide basic information about the length and structure of the school day, what learner needs to bring to school and school holidays

2.4.4 Involving parents and communities in the education of the learners

The strategy of involving parents and communities in the education of learners is important because parents and family members are children’s first most vital teachers who, directly or indirectly, shape the children’s value system, orientation towards learning and view of the world (Banks & Banks 2009:155). Nieto (2010:56) maintains that in programs with strong family involvement components, students are consistently better achievers than otherwise identical programs with less family involvement. She further argues that learners in schools that maintain frequent contact with their communities outperform learners in other schools and those positive effects persist far beyond the short term.

Research has established that parents of minority learners shy away from involvement in their children’s education due to factors like social class (poor background), fear of being stigmatised by teachers and language barriers between them and teachers (Foflonker 2010:55). Banks and Banks (2009:56) point out that “traditional ideas about parent involvement have a built-in gender and social–class bias and can be a barrier to many men and low income parents”. This however, does not negate the fact that involvement of the parents means that their language and culture and the expectations they have for their children can become part of the dialogue. It is through that dialogue that change can begin to happen.

Looking at the problem from the perspective of teacher performance, Nieto (2010:50) argues that family or parental involvement is a very complex issue and in most cases teachers are often
intimidated by it and are reluctant to reach out to families. It is therefore relevant that Banks and Banks (2009:50) give the following recommended steps to increase parent involvement

- Establish two way communications: this can be done through an open door policy, where parents know that they are welcome to assist in the education of their children. Also by sending home some written information about school assignments and goals to keep parents aware of what is going on in class. Moreover, the teacher can talk to parents by phone and report problems such as failing of grades and behaviour problems. Furthermore the teacher can ask for views and opinions of parents on education. Lastly, having at least two in-person conferences a year with parents can be beneficial.

- Enlist support from staff and learners: it is vital to solicit support from other staff members because it is necessary for creating a positive school environment. It is only through collective effort that the recommended actions can bear fruitful results. Strategies include setting up of a parent room, hosting parent nights where parents can learn more about the school and encouraging learners to greet visitors and help them find their way around the school.

- Enlisting support from the community: this can help the learners to put them in touch with a variety of people and as way of letting learners see how people cope with situations.

- Developing learning resources for parents to use at home

- Broadening the conception of parent and community involvement: by allowing the parents to work with their own children. This is regarded as one of the most important roles parents can play in enhancing learning. This is because the parents can help develop in learners a positive self-concept and positive attitude towards school as well as a better understanding of how their efforts affect their achievements.

2.4.5 In-service training for teachers

The teacher has a significant role to play in an intercultural class. However, the challenge for teachers is how to be proactive to create supportive situations without skills. It is therefore important that teachers are capacitated, especially those who were not given such training during their professional education. Foflonker (2010:53) is of the view that teachers’ attitudes towards
learners could have a decisive effect on how well the learners do in school and it is on that basis that she suggests that it is imperative that they are offered skills through in-service training that could empower them to develop culturally responsive ways of teaching all the learners.

Athiemoolam (2002:24) affirms this notion from the data he has from teachers in Port Elizabeth. These teachers indicated that their lack of knowledge, which could be attributed to the fact that they were not adequately trained to work with pupils from different ethnic groups, resulted in misunderstandings. Those teachers further indicated that some were not eager to teach pupils from other ethnic groups as they perceived them as being problematic because they created disciplinary problems.

In the light of the above institutions should design courses which will equip teachers not only with the theoretical basis but also with practical solutions to the problems they encounter in classes. Athiemoolam (2002:20) is of the opinion that in-service training could focus on the following broad areas;

- Teaching methods and techniques in (intercultural) high schools
- Problems experienced in such schools
- Cultural practices among various groups
- Addressing inter-ethnic conflicts
- The intercultural person
- Incorporating (intercultural) material into lessons

Banks and Banks (2009:99) attest to the fact that teachers may not have access to strategies that are effective for diverse student populations because they are not provided with such either at pre service or during in service. There is a huge gap between teachers’ knowledge and skills and the status quo which calls for such skills. The authors therefore suggest that “beginning teacher education programs and effective professional development should equip teachers with culturally responsive and evidence-based strategies.” The effective teaching profile is given in Table 1 to illustrate how culturally responsive teachers can enhance learning. This effective table sums up all the strategies that have been discussed earlier and it shows the impact the teacher can have on the learners.
2.4.6 Improving self-esteem and self-concept of the learners

Foflonker (2010:108) suggests that learners of minority groups often feel they have to prove themselves to be worthy of acceptance and this affects negatively their levels of confidence and esteem. Raising self-esteem of the learners in a multicultural classroom is therefore a prerequisite for effective learning. Gardner (2001:65) states that “self-esteem must come first. If you don’t have children who feel comfortable and confident and are prepared to take risks then you haven’t got hope of raising achievement. For us in school trying to get the right atmosphere is important…” Banks and Banks (2009:10) go further to maintain that psychological captivity is one important aspect that needs to be dealt with if academic achievement is to be achieved. Pretorius (2000:26) asserts that the learning achievement of a learner can be improved by changing his self-concept. The focus should be to improve the learner’s self-perception, self-evaluation and expectations.

The teacher can intervene to improve the self concept of the learners by deliberately creating learning situations where learners can experience the support and acknowledgement of success. According to Pretorius (2000:45) the teacher must stress the following; only if the teacher really believes the pupil can achieve, will his expectations positively influence the pupil’s self concept. Examples of ways in which the teacher can communicate their expectations to learners include placing the learner in a certain ability group (low, average, high); by the attention the teacher pays to the pupil; by the time the teacher spends with the learner, by the degree of difficulty of the assignments given, and by acknowledging communication, approval, praise, personal warmth and encouragement (Pretorius 2000:64). Gardner (2001:43) acknowledges that the following factors can ultimately influence teachers’ expectations of a learner’s achievement:

- Knowledge of learner’s siblings
- Learner’s social milieu
- History of learner’s classroom behaviour
- Learner’s performance
Having elaborated so much on the barriers that inhibit optimal teaching and learning and the strategies that can be used to enhance the learning, the researcher deemed it necessary to include the following table adapted from Banks and Banks (2009) which sums up all the already mentioned points. The table is very important as it highlights some of the skills that a culturally responsive teacher needs to possess in order to enhance learning in a multicultural classroom.
### Table 1: Culturally responsive teaching (Adapted from Banks & Banks, 2009:100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships and interactions</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples of Teacher Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Caring for learners as culturally located individuals | Teacher acknowledges learners cultural identities and allows learners to be “themselves” through learning interactions that are nurturing and show respect for learners’ language and culture. | • Incorporates terms in teacher presentations from learners’ first language/s  
• Correctly pronounces learners’ names  
• References cultural constructs and community activities |
| 2. Caring about learner performance | Teacher has high expectations for learner learning and participation in classroom learning activities. | • Reinforces that all learners can be effective learners  
• Gives all students positive and corrective feedback on how to improve  
• Encourage goals setting and praises effective learning behaviour, including scaffolding, “you can do this, I’ll help” |
| 3. Managing the class to promote learning | Teacher has classroom management and curricular flexibility skills, reflecting both individual and collectives roles and responsibilities to achieve positive outcomes. | • Has in place a class wide management system that creates a caring learning community (e.g.; tribes)  
• Redirects off-task or disruptive behaviour in an effective, non-confrontational way and is a “warm demander”  
• After learning activity is introduced, engages personally with individuals and small groups of students |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships and interactions</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples of Teacher Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4. Interacting with learners discursively and co-constructing knowledge | The teacher promotes student dialogue and debate to share new knowledge and encourage problem solving and higher order thinking. | • Incorporates co-operative learning principles and practices in group work  
• Promotes learner–to-learner problem solving rather than primarily teacher–directed knowledge  
• Solicits learners’ local stories, community experiences and prior knowledge to develop new knowledge |
| 5. Using a range of strategies for teaching and learning activities | The teacher uses different instructional strategies that involve teachers’ and learners’ learning through interactions with one another. | • Facilitates learner–led inquiry (e.g. learners formulate rather than answer teacher questions)  
• Uses concept maps, thinks pair–share, jigsaw, & role playing  
• Links new knowledge and concepts with learners’ lives through discussion of films/stories |
| 6. Promoting educational aspirations within culturally responsive contexts | Teacher makes learning objectives and outcomes explicit and empowers learners to make educational decisions within culturally meaningful contexts | • Develops understanding of learning outcomes and engages learners in promoting, monitoring and reflecting on how outcomes lead to future goals  
• Engages learners in critical examination of how knowledge reflects cultural perspectives and values  
• Encourage learners to reflect on strengths and weaknesses as part of assessments that encourage and develop peer support networks |
2.5 CONCLUSION

The literature consulted in this study provided strong evidence that culture plays a very significant role in the education of learners as learning is socially constructed. The influence of language as an important element of culture was discussed.

The discussion of the literature also revealed that intercultural and multicultural educations are terms associated with equity and equality. However, it became clear that geography plays a role in the use of the two terms, although other differences were also discussed. The evolution of the term intercultural education was discussed from three different countries—namely the United Kingdom, United States of America and Ireland. The United Kingdom and United States of America use the term ‘multicultural education’ whereas Ireland uses ‘intercultural education’. The policies of these countries were also discussed, as point of reference.

The barriers that inhibit optimal learning and teaching were discussed from an intercultural perspective. Strategies that can be used to enhance learning from the same perspective were deliberated upon.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the relevant literature was extensively discussed with regard to the study. This chapter will discuss in detail the research design and methodology that was used in the execution of the empirical study. The rationale behind each of the decisions about research design will be given. This will include describing the researcher’s ontological stance, the research paradigm, methodology, design, methods of data collection and instruments used. Data analysis and ethical considerations will also be dealt with.

Morrison, Manion and Cohen (2000:3), in stressing the importance of defining ontological stance, suggest that ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions, which in turn give rise to methodological considerations. These in turn affect decisions on issues of instrumentation and data collection.

Before dealing in-depth with the methodological aspects of the study, it is imperative that the nature and purpose of research is described. This will lay a good foundation for comprehension of the whole methodological phenomenon. According to Morrison et al (2000:3), research is done to search for truth. Creswell (2005:8) expands on this definition by stating that research is “a cyclical process that typically begins with identifying a research problem or issue of the study...” This definition suggests that there are steps to follow in doing research and that there is a beginning and an end.

The following section outlines the research questions, sub questions and the objectives of the study. In addition, discussion covers the research approach and design that were employed in the execution of the study. Moreover, the sampling and the sampling strategies and data collection instruments used are deliberated upon.
3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is defined by Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:7) as the specific objective that is interrogative in form. They assert that a research question is a breakdown of the general research topic. Although the research questions were presented in Chapter 1, the researcher felt it necessary to repeat them here as they will guide the choice for the approach to and design of the research. Thomas (2009:69) asserts that the research question will determine the whole approach that the researcher intends to take in the study.

The research literature examined for this study indicates that there is a gap to be filled in the literature especially if one looks closely into how the perceptions between the teachers and teachers and between teachers and learners affect the teaching and learning environment. This study is therefore designed to attempt to fill in such a gap by implementing a case study of establishing the link between intercultural differences and optimal teaching and learning environment in a school in Maseru.

The main research question of this study is how the perceptions of teachers and learners from different cultural backgrounds inhibit optimal learning. In order to answer the question, the following sub-questions will be addressed;

- To what extent do the intercultural differences between teachers and learners, learners and learners and between teachers and teachers inhibit the learning environment?
- What strategies can be put in place to turn these intercultural experiences into positive learning enhancing experiences?

3.3 AIM

The aim of this study is to enhance teaching and learning environment through improved intercultural understanding. In addition, the aim is also to identify how the study can be applied in other schools around Lesotho.
3.4 OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are defined by Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:10) as what the researcher expects to achieve by the study. The research objectives are important because evaluation of the results relies on their comparison to the objectives. The research objectives also determine the approach and design to be used in order to ensure that they are met. It is for these reasons that the research objectives are repeated in this chapter.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Determine the extent to which intercultural differences between teachers and learners inhibit the learning environment
- To identify the extent to which intercultural differences between teachers and learners and between teachers and teachers inhibit the learning environment
- To identify strategies that would turn these intercultural experiences into positive learning enhancing experiences

3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Johnson and Christensen (2008:33), a research paradigm is a “perspective about research held by a community of researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values and practices”. They maintain that it is an approach to thinking about doing research. Groenewald (2004:7) is in agreement with the previous authors as he contends that a research paradigm refers to a pattern, model for example or the patterning of the thinking of a person. It is, in essence, the theory of knowledge that allows the researcher to decide how the research phenomenon will be studied.

There are three different paradigms, or approaches to research—qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches (Johnson & Christensen 2008:33, Biklen & Bogdan 2003:10, Schumacher & Mcmillan 2010:11). A lot of literature has shown that for a long time it has been considered that there are two approaches to research, being quantitative and qualitative (Johnson & Christensen 2008, Groenewald 2004, Rakotsoane & Rakotsoane 2006,). However, recently many researchers have included the third approach, which is the mixed method approach.
(Schumacher & McMillan 2010, Johnson & Christensen 2008). For the purposes of this research, the two major paradigms and their characteristics will be discussed and the approach chosen and the justification for the choice will be explained.

3.6 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

According to Biklen and Bogdan (2003:2), qualitative research was not used in the social sciences until the late 1960s. They suggest that qualitative research is used as an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. Struwig and Stead (2001:11) are in agreement with these authors as they suggest that the term qualitative research does not describe a single research method. Hence it is not easily defined although it does have distinguishing characteristics from the other approaches.

Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2006:25) are of the opinion that qualitative research is “rooted in phenomenology which sees social reality as unique”. They further maintain that qualitative research emerged because researchers sometimes found quantitative methods inadequate for investigating many problems in education. Pring (2004:55) suggests that the qualitative approach stems from an anti-positivist interpretive stance that tries to understand people in their natural settings. Creswell (2005:58) gives the following definition: qualitative research is

An inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon... and in order to learn about this phenomenon, the enquirer asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of participants in the form of words or images and analyses the information for description and themes

Struwig and Stead (2001:34) are in agreement with the above definitions but further add another further dimension. They suggest that qualitative research may mean different things but that the most outstanding feature is that it is a situated activity that locates the observer, who is the researcher, in the world. They take the definition further by stating that it consists of a set of
interpretive, material practices that make the world visible and it is these practices that transform the world.

Ary et al (2006:453) give the following as the major characteristics of qualitative research:

- Concern for context and meaning
- Study conducted in natural setting
- Human as primary instrument for data gathering and analysing
- Descriptive data
- Emergent design
- Inductive analysis

Ary et al (2006:454) further cite Janesick (1994) who summarises the characteristics of qualitative research thus:

- Qualitative research is holistic.
- It looks at relationships within a system or culture.
- It refers to the personal, face-to-face and immediate.
- It is focused on understanding a given social setting and not necessarily on making predictions about that setting.
- It demands the researcher staying at the setting over time.
- It demands time in analysis equal to time in the field
- It demands that the researcher develops a model of what occurred in a social setting.
- It requires the researcher to become the instrument.
- It incorporates informed consent for participation and is responsive to ethical concerns
- It requires ongoing analysis of the data.

Biklen and Bogdan (2003:4) further suggest that there are five features of qualitative research. These are:

- Naturalistic perspective: qualitative research has actual settings as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. The authors maintain that the word naturalistic “comes from ecological approaches in biology where researchers enter and
spend considerable time in schools, families, neighbourhoods and other locales learning about educational concerns”.

- Descriptive data: the data collected is in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers.
- Concern with process: qualitative researchers are concerned with process not simply with outcomes or the end results.
- Inductive: qualitative researchers analyse their data inductively.
- Meaning: Meaning is very crucial to qualitative researchers as their main interest is “how different people make sense of their lives”

### 3.7 QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

Quantitative research is defined by Struwig and Stead (2001:4) as “a form of conclusive research involving large representative samples and fairly structured data collection procedures and its primary role is to test the hypotheses”. Johnson and Christensen (2008:33) add to the definition by maintaining that quantitative research relies on the collection of numerical data.

Ary et al (2006:449) maintain that quantitative research “strives for testable and confirmable theories that explain phenomena by showing how they are derived from theoretical assumptions”. They further argue that, compared to qualitative approach, the quantitative approach is concerned with the discovery of “social facts” that are “devoid of subjective perceptions of intentions and divorced from particular social and historical contexts”. In addition, Struwig and Stead (2001:5) are of the opinion that quantitative approach is based largely on positivism and neo–positivism.

Ary et al (2006:452) identify the following characteristics of the quantitative approach;

- Purpose: the purpose of the quantitative approach is to generalize findings, to predict behaviour and to provide causal explanations.
- Approach: the approach begins with hypothesis, grounds the study by using theory, manipulates and controls variables, deductive then inductive, looks for norms, reduces data to numbers and reports are written in a very explicit and abstract language.
Assumptions: the quantitative approach suggests that there is an objective reality, the world is stable.

Role of researcher: the researcher has to be impartial and detached and inquiry is as value-free as possible.

Methods: focused on quantity, sampling is random, predetermined structured and precise methods are used.

Struwig and Stead (2001:4), on the other hand, suggest the following characteristics of the quantitative approach:

- Constructs and their measurement: the quantitative approach studies the variables which are based on the hypothesis. The method used to measure the constructs is the use of questionnaires.
- Causality: the quantitative approach establishes causal relationships (cause and effect relationships between the variables).
- Generalisation: the results are generalised beyond the confines of the sample.
- Replication: the approach gives a way of determining the extent to which findings are applicable to other similar contexts, allowing other researchers to repeat the study if they wish to.
- Individual as focus: the approach’s philosophy is that reality is fixed.

3.8 APPROACH EMPLOYED FOR THE STUDY AND THE RATIONALE FOR THE CHOICE

The research approach employed in the execution of this study is qualitative. Creswell (2005:61) argues that it is often a challenge to eventually select the best approach. He suggests the following important factors to consider in order identifying the most suitable approach:

- The audience for the study
- The experiences and training the researcher brings to the research
- The type of research problem that the researcher needs to address.
Biklen and Bogdan (2003:4) suggest that “qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context and they feel that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs”. This allows the researcher to find information rich in character and quality. Ary et al (2006:452) are of the opinion that qualitative research is interested in quality—in terms of nature and essence—and not quantity.

For this study, the qualitative approach was seen as the best approach to use in order to address the research questions. The approach was selected because of its personal nature, which allows the researcher to get data at first hand in being the main instrument in collecting data. The researcher talks with participants in the setting, observes their activities and may also have access to their documents.

The aim of this study is for the researcher to have in-depth understanding of intercultural differences. It is through immersion with participants at the chosen sites that the most accurate answers can be achieved. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because of its flexibility and allowance for the emergence of methods. The assumption that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied (Biklen & Bogdan 2003:5) is also an attraction of using the qualitative approach for the study.

In the course of the study, the researcher interacted with the participants by interviewing them, having informal conversations with them and by observing how they interacted during lessons and out of classroom at the play ground.

3.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Morrison et al (2000:73) there is no single blueprint for planning research but research design is governed by the notion of ‘fitness for purpose’. Research design is defined by Mouton (2005:55) as a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends conducting his/her research. The research design therefore has to indicate “who will be studied, when, where and under what circumstances they will be observed in their own environment”. In summary, a research design gives a precise road map of the study.
Morrison et al (2000:75) are of the opinion that the process of operationalisation is critical for effective research because “what is required here is translating a very general research aim or purpose into specific, concrete questions to which specific, concrete answers can be given”. Conrad and Serlin (2006:377) argue that the design will depend on the philosophical assumptions underlying how the inquiry about the phenomenon being studied can best be pursued.

Johnson and Christensen (2008:48) state that qualitative research design is generally based on one of the following approaches:

- Phenomenology
- Ethnography
- Case study
- Grounded theory
- Historical research

Ary et al (2006:456) are in agreement with Johnson and Christensen but add to the list by also including the following:

- Basic interpretive studies
- Content or document analysis

For the purposes of this study the characteristics of case studies, ethnographic studies, phenomenological studies and grounded theory are highlighted. This is done with the purpose of showing the road map which led to the choice of the design and the justification for the choice.

3.10 CASE STUDY DESIGN

According to Freebody (2003:81) the case study has enjoyed considerable prominence as a qualitative research design for some decades because of “the researchers’ frustration at the apparent lack of impact of more traditional forms of research on daily educational practice and conversely educators’ frustration at the apparent non-translatability of many research findings”.

66
Johnson and Christensen (2008:406) describe a case study as a bounded system that provides a detailed account of one or more cases.

Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:18) define a case study as “an in-depth study of a single organisation, institution, programme, event decision, policy or group which serves as the case being investigated”. They further maintain that a case study is often used when there is a new phenomenon about which not much is known or in cases where there are very rare events in which few subjects can be found. Ary et al (2006:458) maintain that case studies may employ multiple methods of data collection and do not rely on a single technique. However, whatever techniques are used, the focus is on a single phenomenon.

Biklen and Bogdan (2003:54) suggest that there are a variety of different types of case studies and they mention the following: historical organisational case studies, observational case studies, life history and documents. Johnson and Christensen (2008:406) in addition give the types of case study research designs as intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. The main characteristics of these types of case studies will be highlighted below:

3.10.1 Intrinsic case study

The main interest of an intrinsic case study is in the studying and understanding of a specific case. It is defined by Johnson and Christensen (2008:406) as the “classic single case design”. The researcher gives in-depth particulars of the case to shed light on. Its goal is said to be to “understand the case a holistic entity, as well as to understand its inner workings and to understand a more general process based on an analysis of the single case”. It may also be used to explore or learn about a little known phenomenon by studying a single case in depth (Rakotsoane & Rakotsoane 2006:20; Johnson & Christensen 2008:408). The advantage of using this kind of design is that “researchers can put all their time and resources into the study of a single case and can therefore develop an in-depth understanding of it” (Johnson & Christensen 2008:408).

3.10.2 Instrumental case study

In an Instrumental case study the researcher’s primary goal is the understanding of something more general than the particular case. Johnson and Christensen (2008:408) suggest that the
interest is less particularistic and more universalistic. The researcher wants to know why a phenomenon operates as it does. These authors further maintain that academic researchers who use this type of case study are “interested in generalising and extending the findings in research literatures on various topics”.

3.10.3 Collective case study

This is the studying of multiple cases in one research study (Rakotsoane & Rakotsoane 2006:15). Researchers using this approach believe that deeper understanding of the topic will be achieved by studying multiple cases concurrently. The advantage of using a collective case study that is identified by Johnson and Christensen (2008:408) is that the researcher is able to compare similarities and differences across multiple cases and thereby get a better understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, the researcher can effectively test a theory by studying the results of multiple cases and is more likely to be able to generalise in this case than with the intrinsic case study.

3.11 ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY DESIGN

Freebody (2003:75) suggests that ethnography developed as a form of social science enquiry aimed at describing and analysing the practices and beliefs of cultures and communities. Johnson and Christensen (2008:49) are in agreement with Freebody as they assert that ethnography, one of the most popular designs in qualitative research, is focused on describing the culture of a group of people. Ary et al (2006:458) explain that ethnographers undertake their study without any hypotheses, so as to avoid predetermining what is observed or what information is elicited from informants. They add that the ethnographer “explores and tests hypotheses but the hypotheses evolve out of the fieldwork itself”. Johnson and Christensen (2008:49) further maintain that ethnographers try to use holistic descriptions as they describe how members of a group interact and also how they come together to make up the group as a whole.

The advantage of using ethnography, as presented by Ary et al (2006:458), is its observation of behaviour in a real life setting, the assumption being that human behaviour can be fully understood only by knowing the setting in which it occurs. However, it has some limitations and
Johnson and Christensen (2008:405) suggest that its main limitation is that its findings depend so much on particular research observations and interpretations of the data.

### 3.12 GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory is defined by Johnson and Christensen (2008:49) as a “qualitative approach to generating and developing a theory from the data you collect in a research study”. Ary et al (2006:462) are of the opinion that the emphasis on theory in grounded theory distinguishes it from other qualitative designs. This kind of design focuses on collecting data about people’s experiences in a particular context and the researcher then inductively builds a theory from their data (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:15, Ary et al. 2006:462, Johnson & Christensen 2008:49). Characteristics of grounded theory, as enumerated by Johnson and Christensen (2008:411) (who cite Glaser and Strauss (1967)) are the following:

- Data collection and analysis are concurrent and continual
- Three steps coding process (open, axial and selective)
- Constant comparative methods
- Fit, understanding, generality and control
- Sampling to refine researcher’s emerging theoretical ideas
- Integration of the theoretical framework
- Developing theory is grounded in the data, the consequence of which is that the development of a theory is a never ending process

### 3.13 PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDIES

This design according to Johnson and Christensen (2008:48) is considered as the first major type of qualitative research. They define it as “a form of qualitative research in which the researcher attempts to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon”. The key element of this design is that the researcher attempts to understand how people experience a phenomenon from the person’s own perspectives and experiences (Johnson & Christensen...
2008:48, Ary et al. 2006:290). According to Ary et al. (2006:461) what distinguishes phenomenology from other qualitative designs is “that the subjective experience is at the centre of the inquiry”. They further claim that the main question aims to determine the essence of the experience as perceived by the participants.

The participants in a phenomenological study are chosen because they have been exposed to or gone through the experience being studied and hence are able to share their thoughts and feelings about it. The researcher normally interviews 10 to 25 individuals and the interviews may be lengthy, lasting one to two hours (Ary et al 2006:461).

The characteristics of phenomenological studies, as explained by Johnson and Christensen (2008:394), are the following:

- A study describes the experiences of a phenomenon of one or more individuals
- Primary data collection method is in-depth interviews with up to 10-15 people
- Data are analysed by listing significant statements, determining meaning of those statements and identifying the essence of the phenomenon
- The report has rich description of the essential or invariant structures


The design that was used is the intrinsic case study because the researcher wanted to get an in-depth understanding of the situation and the way the participants interpreted it. Athiemoolam (2002:95) cites Merriam (1988) who argues that the interest with case study approach “is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable and in discovery rather than confirmation”. Ary et al (2006:456) argue that the relevance of case studies in education stems from the fact that case studies are anchored in real life and can provide rich detailed accounts of phenomena.

3.14.1 Qualitative case study design

Ary et al (2006:456) define case studies as “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community”. The
rationale for the decision to adopt a case study approach is the possibility it gives for depth of enquiry. It allows for extensive probing which can lead to the discovery of previously unsuspected relationships (Ary et al 2006:457). The advantages of using case studies given by Morrison et al (2000:184) also informed the decision. Specifically, these include that:

- the results are more easily understood by a wide audience, including non-academics as they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional language
- the results are immediately intelligible, they speak for themselves
- they catch unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data
- they are strong on reality
- they provide insights into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting interpretation of other similar cases
- they can be undertaken by a single researcher without needing a full research team
- they can embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrolled variables

The researcher therefore believes that the case study will give accurate and convincing answers that would appeal to all and also take into consideration this is not a topic that has been widely considered in Lesotho. The case study approach will allow exploration of intercultural experiences between the Basotho and non-Basotho will with a view to providing recommendations for possible strategies to be implemented to ensure that optimal learning and teaching can be achieved.

For the purpose of this study one case study location was identified in Maseru. This was selected because of the large numbers of different cultures of learners and teachers at the school. Lichtman (2010:82) suggests that in choosing cases one has to look at the typical, exemplary or model or the unusual or unique. The case was studied with the expectation of getting the in depth understanding from the experiences of learners (Basotho and non Basotho), teachers and principal.

3.14.2 Sampling

The qualitative researcher must first decide whom or what they want to study (Johnson & Christensen 2008:243).
In light of the above statement, this section will give the sample that was used for data collection that is the number of schools, learners and teachers who participated in the study. The reasons for the sample are also discussed.

3.14.2.1 Research population

The research population is defined by Ary et al (2006:167) as “all members of any well defined class of people, events or objects”. Sowell (2001:43) is in agreement with Ary et al as he maintains that “a population refers to a group that has one or more characteristics in common, such as middle school students”. He however advises that using every member of a population in a research study is not usually practical unless that population is very small. This leads to defining the target population and accessible population. A target population includes all the people with a common characteristic to whom investigators plan to generalise their results and accessible population have fewer members than do target populations (Johnson & Christensen 2008: 222).

In the study the target population entailed the principal of the chosen school in Maseru, the teachers (Basotho and foreigners) and learners (Basotho and foreigners). This is because the researcher believes that the chosen target population will represent all stakeholders who can give the views that will serve to answer the research questions.

3.14.2.2 Sample and social network

A sample is defined as a set of elements taken from a larger population according to certain rules (Conrad & Serlin 2006:205: Johnson &Christensen 2008:223). The sample population is referred to as a subset by Sowell (2001:43) and as a portion of a population by Ary et al (2006:167). Sampling on the other hand is described by Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:26) as the “act, process or technique of selecting a suitable sample (a finite part of the statistical population whose properties are studied to know about the whole) or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population”.

Ary et al (2006: 472) suggest that qualitative researchers try to obtain a sample that is believed to be representative of everything that is being observed. They further advise that that the sample is
not necessarily random. The researcher has to define the criterion or attributes that the people to be studied must possess and then use the criterion to select the sample that will give the best answers to the research question. The goal for doing this is that the researcher will locate information-rich individuals. Freebody (2003:25) explains that information-rich cases are those selected individuals from whom we have the most to learn or the ones that can provide insight and deep understanding regarding the topic of interest. Ary et al (2006:472) argue that it is because of the depth and extent of the information sought in qualitative studies that purposive samples are typically small. However, there are a variety of constraints that can affect the sampling process. Johnson and Christensen (2008:243) identify these constraints as:

- the availability of appropriate participants
- the accessibility of potential participants
- the costs of locating the participants
- enlisting their participation

Purposive sampling, which was used in the study, is judged to be typical or representative. Ary et al (2006:174) argue that the critical question in purposive sampling is the extent to which judgment can be relied on to arrive at a typical sample. Morrison et al (2000:103) state that, as the name suggests, the sample is chosen for specific purposes and the researcher builds up the sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.

Sowell (2001:44), when deliberating on the issue, writes that purposive samples are composed of individuals or groups that provide information “about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research”. He extends the definition by stating that to claim that a sample is purposive, research presents evidence showing that data collected from selected participants are particularly relevant as answers to the research questions. Ary et al (2006:472) maintain that sampling should be terminated when no new information is forthcoming from the new units, which they refer to as ‘data saturation’.

3.14.2.3 Sample of teachers

A sample of 10 teachers (6 Basotho and 4 foreigners) was identified as the most appropriate sample. This number is inclusive of the principal. The teachers will include the class teachers who are the custodians of each classroom, the heads of departments (inclusive of Life
Orientation head of department) and other teachers. The selection was done so that at least the key accounting teachers are included and also the subject teachers who are the ones always in classrooms. The class teachers were selected so that they can also assist in the selection of the learners who are to participate in the study.

3.14.2.4 Sample of learners

A total of 20 learners were selected. The selection was done with the researcher being mindful of the fact that time constraints may make it difficult for her to work with a bigger group of learners. Further, data collection was done during examination time and this meant that to get more learners would not be possible. It is worth mentioning that even though it was examination time the learners had to be in classes after writing each paper. This was due to the fact that in some subjects, teachers were still behind in terms of finishing up the syllabuses. The learners chosen were from Form A to Form E and included 13 Basotho learners and 7 foreign learners. The selection is inclusive of the new learners in the school (Form A) and the middle classes (Form B and C) and the senior learners who are about to exit the school system (Form D and E). The class teachers were asked to assist with the selection of the participants as the researcher believed that the teachers would be in a better position to select participants who would be willing to take part in the study. A focus group discussion was conducted at the school with all foreign learners already chosen for the study as the researcher considered that it might be easier for these learners to air their opinions if they are in a group. Interviews were conducted with all learners.

3.14.2.5 Sample of school

It was a challenge to identify the best school for the study because most of the schools in Maseru that have multicultural learner and teacher populations are private schools. After considerable consultations with some of the teachers in the different schools, the researcher found the school where study was conducted. The school that was studied was the one that had multicultural populations. The school was selected on the basis of the following criterion:

- the school should be multicultural
- the medium of instruction should be English
- the school should be accessible to the researcher
The criteria identified reflect the nature of the study. The multicultural component is essential if the research questions are to be answered. The medium of instruction was chosen so that communication between the researcher and participants would not be hampered because of language barriers. In addition, all the stakeholders can give their views to arrive at an in-depth understanding of the situation. The schools accessibility will make it easy for the researcher to get there, especially taking into consideration that data will be collected in winter when Lesotho is a very cold and in some instances not accessible due to snow fall.

3.14.2.6 Geographical location of the school

The school chosen was selected from Maseru city which is the capital town of Lesotho. X High School is a public school that has attracted a lot of foreign nationals more so of the Indian origin. It is not regarded as one of the best schools in terms of pass rate but of interest about the school is that the foreign learners they have, have always been in the top 10 in the country. The other aspect of the school worth mentioning is that its infrastructure is poor.

3.15 DATA GATHERING STRATEGIES

Sowell (2001:69) states that it is the research questions that should guide the choice of data gathering strategies. ‘Method of data collection’ is defined by Johnson and Christensen (2008:201) as a “technique for physically obtaining data to be analysed in the research study”. They give the following as data gathering strategies used in qualitative studies;

- tests
- questionnaires
- interviews
- focus groups
- observation
- secondary or existing data

They however maintain that, even though some of the strategies can also be found in quantitative research. There are some contrasting characteristics with quantitative research. Ary et al
(2006:474) suggest the following as “common” data gathering strategies typical of qualitative research;

- observation
- interviewing
- document analysis

The data gathering strategies that were employed during the execution of the study are interviews, observation and focus group discussion. The perceptions of teachers and learners from different cultural backgrounds were investigated, together with how they could ultimately inhibit optimal learning and teaching.

Note taking was vital, especially during observation, because the researcher felt that she might get crucial information which would not come across during the use of the other methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, learners and principal. The same foreign learners that were used during the interview were used for focus group discussion.

### 3.15.1 Interviews

Interviews are commonly used with “qualitative research because they allow the researcher to gather data on subjects’ opinions, beliefs and feelings about the situation in their own words” (Ary et al 2006:480). Ary et al (2006) extend their definition by maintaining that interviews provide data that cannot be obtained through observation; rather they can be used to verify observation. Even though there are a variety of interview formats—including the structured, unstructured and semi-structured—they all share the characteristic that the questions are open-ended (that is, not answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no’). Creswell (2005:207) gives the following steps to follow when conducting a qualitative interview;

- identification of the interviewees, which should be selected purposefully
- determining the type of the interview to use—the researcher should choose the one that will allow her/him to best learn the participants’ views and answer each research question
- during the interview, the researcher should audio tape the questions and responses
• the researcher should take brief notes during the interview
• the place chosen for the interview should be quiet and suitable for conducting the interview
• the researcher should obtain consent from the interviewee to participate in the study
• the researcher should have a plan for the interview, but be flexible
• the researcher should use probes to obtain additional information
• the researcher should be courteous and professional when the interview is over by thanking the interviewee and assuring him/her of the confidentiality of the responses

Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:25) give the following tips in order to get the most out of an interview, the researcher should:

• choose a place that will be comfortable for the participant
• identify themselves to the participant and explain why they want to do the interview and how information will be used
• remember that some people do not feel comfortable speaking with a tape recorder running and therefore ask for permission to use it before interviewing the respondent
• try to relax when carrying out the interview
• If the interviewees can only speak and understand a language that the researcher does not speak, local people should be engaged to help as interpreters. The age of the interpreters should be close to the interviewees
• listen carefully and pay attention to their body language
• remain impartial and keep their opinion to themselves

The questions that the researcher asks are crucial in giving him or her relevant or irrelevant data and one other crucial factor to the researcher is that he/she needs to listen carefully if he/she wants to get the required information (Ary et al 2006:479).

3.15.1.1 Advantages of using interviews

Ary et al (2006:480) identify the following advantages of using interviews:

• an interview supplies large volumes of in-depth data rather quickly
• it also provides insight on the participant’s perspectives, the meaning of events for the people involved, information about the site and perhaps information on unanticipated issues
• It can also allow for immediate follow up and clarification, where it is needed.

Creswell (2005:204) gives the following advantages that add to the above list:

• the interview can provide crucial data when participants cannot directly be observed
• the interview can allow the interviewees to describe detailed personal information
• the interviewer has better control over the type of information he/she gets since probing can be used to elicit information

3.15.1.2 Disadvantages of using interviews

Despite the advantages, there are some shortcomings with regard to the use of interviews in collecting data. A number of disadvantages are listed by Wellington (2004) and Ary et al (2006:480), including:

• the researcher needs to limit the time used
• the techniques of the interviews are unstructured and uncontrolled
• in certain cases, if the interviewer knows the interviewee the interviewee tends to shy away from answering questions
• at times the interviewees may not be willing to share information or might even give false information
• interviews require a great deal of time to conduct and later to transcribe the audio tapes or other notes
• interviewers need skill and practice to carry a successful interview

Having discussed in length the interview as one of the data collection strategies, the researcher felt it would be necessary to differentiate between a semi-structured and a structured interview.

According to Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:15), a semi-structured interview is organized around interview guide and it contains topics and themes to be covered and this is done through an interview guide. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:50) further reiterate that a semi-structured
interview is flexible and fluid in structure and this is done to ensure sequence and how particular areas might be followed up and developed with different interviewees. Moreover, the questions are more or less open-ended and this allows for the researcher to make the participant to expand upon their answer and give more details as well as adding additional perspectives.

On the other hand, a structured interview follows a fixed with a specified order (Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane 2006:15). The questions used are closed-ended and very standardised with an ordered response choice and there is little or no probing done perhaps the researcher can only repeat or clarify instructions (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:50).

It is because of the stated advantages of an interview that the researcher chose interviewing as one of the strategies to use for the study. The researcher was convinced that the semi-structured interview was appropriate as it would allow her to probe to obtain additional information as highlighted in the differences discussed above.

The literature studied showed that intercultural education aims to enhance tolerance and sensitive attitude of learners towards other cultures, respect and recognise diversity, promote equality and human rights and challenges unfair discrimination (European Union 2008, Birzea 2003, The Ireland National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2003). Based on this background, the researcher deemed it fit to structure the questions for the semi-structured interview around the four dimensions: aspects of educational equality and quality, unfair discrimination, respect for humanity and tolerance towards each other (appendix 1). Moreover, the researcher formulated the other two questions in the quest to address the research questions and eventually achieve the aims of the study.

3.15.2 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussions are another kind of interview but it differs from the one-to-one interview discussed above. The difference is that with the focus group discussion, the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher (Morrison et al 2000:288). Ary et al (2006:480) extends on the views of Morrison et al by suggesting that the “focus group typically centres on a particular issue and the trained interviewer elicits the views
of the group members while noting interactions within the group”. Morrison et al (2000:288) further cite Morgan (1998) and Kruger (1988) who maintain that focus groups are useful for:

- Orientation to a particular field of focus
- Developing themes, topics and schedules for subsequent interviews or questionnaires
- Generating hypotheses that derive from the insights and data collected from the group
- Generating and evaluating information from different sub-groups of a population
- Gathering information from previous studies

In common with any other data gathering tool, the expectation is for the focus group to provide relevant data and hence, for its success, there are certain rules to follow. Ary et al (2006:480) bring to light the fact that the researcher has to make a point of not imposing his/her agenda on the discussion and must be open to responses that are contrary to their own knowledge, beliefs or perspectives. Sowell (2001:156) states that focus groups work more successfully if they are composed of relative strangers rather than friends. Creswell (2005:206) suggests that “interviewers should direct answers to concrete, detailed accounts rather than generalizations”. Morrison et al (2000:288), drawing from the work of Morgan (1988:41-48), add the following issues which need to be addressed in running the focus group discussion:

- Deciding on the number of focus groups is crucial if the researcher wants to get an outcome that is unique
- Deciding on the size of the group is also very important—the group should not be too large or too small because if it is too large it is unmanageable.
- How to allow for people not “turning up” on the day it is important for the researcher to over recruit participants by over 20%
- Taking extreme care with the sampling is vital so that every participant is the bearer of the particular characteristic required or that the group has homogeneity of background in the required area.
- Ensuring that participants have something to say and feel comfortable enough to say it
- Chairing the meeting so that a balance is struck between being too directive and too lenient hence tracking off the point.
Ary et al (2006:482) further suggests that groups should be homogeneous in status and prestige so that all participants feel comfortable to express their views and opinions.

The focus group discussion that was conducted consisted of 7 foreign learners. The criterion that was used in the selection of the participants was that they should be foreigners. The researcher opted for this formation because she felt the Basotho would be able to give all the information during interviews but the foreigners might still withhold some hence during the focus group they will be able to give the information freely. The central question that was being addressed during the focus group discussion was; **Mention and discuss the factors in your class that affect your learning?**

The advantages of using the focus group discussions are the following as spelt out by Ary et al (2006:481), Morrison et al (2000:288) and Creswell (2005:206):

- Focus groups are more flexible and open in form, with the respondents free to answer in their own words and they can answer briefly or in length.
- The researcher is able to gain insight into how the participants are thinking and why they are thinking as they do.
- Focus group discussions are more economical in terms of time and money than individual interviews.
- Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among the participants will likely yield the best information.
- Focus group interviews may trigger thoughts and ideas among participants that might not emerge during an individual interview.

Just like any other data collection instrument, focus group discussions are no exceptions with regard to having disadvantages. Lichtman (2010:154) identifies the following drawbacks:

- If not conducted well focus groups can be chaotic
- It needs skill and practice to conduct focus groups successfully. The researcher was prepared for the task as she was able to practice conducting focus group discussions when she volunteered to collect data with one organisation that was conducting a study in Lesotho prisons.
3.15.3 Observation

Observation is regarded as the basic method for obtaining data in qualitative research (Lichtman 2010:120). Ary et al (2006:474) assert that the qualitative observation is far different from the quantitative observation, because the qualitative one is a more global type of observation than the quantitative one which is systematic and structured. Johnson and Christensen (2008:186) are of the opinion that observation is the watching of behavioural patterns of the people in certain situations to obtain information about phenomenon of interest. Observation assists in the understanding of the complexity of human behaviour and interrelationships among groups (Sowell 2001:51). This includes listening to, looking and taking notes at whatever the researcher sees as crucial for the study.

Lichtman (2010:166) argues that researchers normally do not plan their observation and, as a result, they end up moving away from their initial focus. He therefore suggests the following issues need to be looked into before observation can be made:

- The researcher has to make a conscious decision as to what is to be studied and in what situation.
- The research should think about the group they want to observe (formal group, informal group or occasional group).
- The research needs to be certain that they will gain access because in some schools there might be resistance because people are sensitive about being observed
- Decide on the frequency and length of the time that observations are to be conducted
- The researcher must be sure of their role as an observer (participant observer or unobtrusive observer)

The advantages of using observation as a data collection instrument when conducting a qualitative study (Johnson & Christensen 2008:23) are:

- The researcher has access to the natural setting because she is part of the group
- The researcher is able to get information she/he might not get from the interviews

However, Ary et al (2006:476) argue that there are a number of limitations in using observation as a tool for collecting data:
- There is a possible effect that the observer might have on the results
- People might behave differently once they are being watched

The researcher might not see what he or she is looking for. The observation that the researcher did for this study was during classes in order to establish if there were any noticeable prejudices against the non-Basotho or even against Basotho by foreigners. It should be noted that even though it was examination time, the classes were still going on as the school had organised revision classes for all learners. In addition, the researcher was interested in studying the behaviour of learners whilst in the playground during break and the teachers in the staff room. Notes were taken on all relevant behaviour noticed. Although Lichtman (2010:167) argues that observation needs to be planned, it became evident during the study that observation needs to be flexible because important points can be missed if observation is too focused.

### 3.15.4 Triangulation

According to Ary et al (2006:505), structural corroboration is very important in qualitative research as the use of multiple types of data collected could either support or contradict each other. They therefore suggest that there are two types of corroboration, namely data triangulation and methods triangulation. Data triangulation refers to the use, where data has been collected with one procedure or instrument, of data collected using different instruments to confirm the findings. On the other hand, method triangulation refers to the use of more than one method in the study. Sowell (2001:15) adds to the definitions by suggesting that triangulation refers to the combining of two or more data collection techniques or methods in one study. For this study, I used interviews, focus group discussion and observation as data collection methods and this was done with the purpose of triangulating the data and hence getting the most credible information.

### 3.16 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to gain an understanding of social and psychological phenomena from participants’ perspectives. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:12)
suggest that qualitative researchers become immersed in the situation and phenomenon being studied. Because the qualitative researchers aim is not to test any theory or rather to look for the truth, they take a considerable amount of time with participants to get information first hand from the participants. Further, they can even go back to the participants for clarification if they so need.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:12) further state that qualitative researchers may assume interactive social roles in which they record observations and interviews with participants in a range of contexts. Biklen and Bogdan (2003:33) claim that the researcher’s primary role is to add to knowledge and not to pass judgment on a setting. Hence researchers doing qualitative research guard against their own biases. They acknowledge that it might be difficult for a researcher to divorce themselves from their “past experiences or who you are and what you believe and what you value”, and that it is advisable to accept that being a clean slate is neither possible nor desirable. Thus the goal is to be more reflective and conscious of how personal values may interfere with the study and to take that situation as some enrichment rather than eliminating it.

3.17 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

According to Gay and Airasian (2003:239), data analysis takes place simultaneously with data collection. They further state that the analysis itself requires five iterative steps: reading, memorizing, describing, classifying and interpreting in a cyclical process that focuses on becoming familiar with the data and identifying main themes in it. Christensen and Johnson (2008:531) are in agreement with the previous authors, but they refer to the cyclical process of collecting and analysing data as the interim analysis. They claim that interim analysis is used in qualitative research because “qualitative researchers usually collect data over an extended time period and they continually learn more and more about what they are studying during (the) time frame”.

Mouton (2005:108) suggests that data analysis involves the breaking up of data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. He maintains that prior to analysis, the researcher has to go through all the data so that it can be categorised and patterns identified. Information can be categorised into relevant headings and topics.
In contrast, Gay and Airasian (2003:239) are of the opinion that, as the researcher begins to internalise and reflect on the data, the initial sequence loses its structure and become less predictable. They maintain that it is not the four steps that lead to understanding and interpretation but the researcher’s ability to think, imagine, hypothesise and analyse. The researcher is the data interpreter, digesting the contents of qualitative data and finding common threads in it. Ary et al (2006:490) contend that analysing qualitative data can appear overwhelming but it becomes manageable when broken down into three key stages; familiarisation and organising, coding and recoding and summarising.

3.17.1 Familiarisation and organisation

The interviews and focus group discussion that were conducted were audio taped. Additional notes were taken during observation. Ary et al (2006:490) suggest that the researcher should first become familiar with the data through reading and rereading the notes and transcriptions and listening repeatedly to the audiotapes. They further advise that the data be typed and preferably to transcribe all the data, including the interviews and focus group discussion audio taped. Once the transcriptions are done, the researcher should continue to read and reread the data to familiarise herself with it. Ary et al (2006:491) maintain that the “major task of organising the large body of information begins after familiarisation”.

Gay and Airasian (2003:239) maintain that when writing up interview transcripts, no changes or paraphrasing for correcting grammatical errors is allowed. Johnson and Christensen (2008:340) report that it is during the transcription process that identifiable information is stripped to ensure confidentiality.

3.17.2 Coding and recoding

A code is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:370) as “a name or a phrase that is used to provide meaning to segment”. This is done once the researcher has familiarised him/herself with the data. It is suggested by Ary et al (2006:492) that this step is the core of qualitative analysis and includes the identification of categories and themes and their refinement. During the coding, data is sorted by looking for units of meaning. This might be words, phrases, sentences, and subjects’ way of thinking, behaviour patterns and events that seem to appear regularly and that seem important (Ary et al 2006:492).
Johnson and Christensen (2008:534) advise that it is during the first phase of coding that the master list is developed. Similarly, Ary et al (2006:439) maintain that developing codes enables the researcher to physically separate material that bears on a certain topic from other material. It is through this second stage that categories and themes will emerge, which will give the pattern codes which will be used as headings and sub headings during interpretation. They cite Bogdan and Biklen (1998) who give the following as some categories that might be used:

- Setting/context
- Definition of the situation
- Perspectives held by subjects
- Subjects’ ways of thinking about people and objects

Process

- Activity
- Event
- Strategy
- Relationship and social structure
- Methods

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:371) give the following as steps to identify and refine data;

- get a sense of the whole
- generate initial codes from the data
- compare codes for duplication
- try out the provisional coding
- continue to refine coding

3.17.3 Summarising

Once the data has been coded and recoded, forming categories and themes is done. The data will then be summarised. At this stage it is ready for interpretation (Ary et al 2006: 453).
3.18 RESEARCH ETHICS

Research ethics require strict adherence to ethical standards in planning and conducting research (Sowell 2001:16). Babbie (2001:470) maintains that anyone who is involved in research needs to be aware of the general agreement about what is proper and improper in scientific research.

In order for me to adhere to the moral and ethical principles I did the following;

- Confidentiality and anonymity: Athiemoolam (2002:114) suggests that “the principles of confidentiality and anonymity can resolve many of the ethical dilemmas the researcher may find himself/herself in”. I therefore assured the participants that all the information they provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality and that their names will not be given. The name of the school will not be used but pseudonym will be preferred to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity.

- Requesting for permission to conduct research: before any data could be collected I had to write letters to the principal requesting permission for me to conduct my study at his/her respective school. They were made aware of the objectives of the study and who were to be interviewed. It is only after receiving positive responses to these requests that I was able to collect data.

- Informed Consent: Babbie (2001:470) is of the opinion that informed consent is called voluntary participation. This means that no-one is to be forced to take part in the study unless they so wish. The participants were made aware that they were involved on voluntary basis and they could withdraw at any time they wish. It was imperative that before data were collected permission was sought not only from the principal of the concerned school but also the parents, who were also contacted for their consent.

3.19 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the different research approaches and their characteristics were discussed and the rationale for the chosen approach (qualitative) was given. The different qualitative designs and
their characteristics were described. The case study, as the design employed for this study, was discussed and the choice was justified. The population, social network, sampling and sampling procedure used in the study were discussed. The methods used to collect and analyse data were explained. Research ethics as the guiding principles for a trustworthy study were also explained. The next chapter will give a detailed account of how the data was analysed.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 gave a detailed account of the research design and methodology that was used in the execution of the study. The reasons for the chosen instruments for data collection and analysis were also discussed. The discussion was based on the literature and related to the nature of the study.

In this chapter, the findings from interviews, observations and focus group discussions are analyzed and interpreted. The questions that were used to do the interview and focus group discussions are used as the themes and the sub-themes of the analysis. The researcher will do the analysis and interpretation of the findings from the interviews and focus group discussions together as the sample used for both was the same. Moreover, the findings from the observations are analysed and interpreted. The rationale for this is based on the fact that the sample used for both interviews and focus group discussion was the same. Further, taking this route avoids repetition of the findings during the presentation.

The findings are discussed in a descriptive format and direct quotations will be used from the verbatim transcriptions. No editing of the language used by the participants is done. The findings are explained, compared and contrasted with the relevant literature to validate the findings. This is done in line with the study’s aim to establish whether the barriers to teaching and learning and strategies to enhance teaching and learning, are apparent in the case of a public school in Maseru (as discussed in Chapter 2).

4.2 ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

In order to determine the intercultural experiences that either inhibit or enhance learning, questions were asked of both learners and teachers. There were a number of factors that emerged
from the responses with regard to intercultural experiences and the factors that either inhibit or enhance learning.

4.2.1. **Intercultural experiences that inhibit or enhance educational equality and quality for all**

As stated in Chapter 2, the right to education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 26. However, the main challenge in ensuring that education that is provided is both quality and equal to all citizens irrespective of their social class. This section discusses how the intercultural differences amongst the teachers and learners in Maseru High school either inhibit or enhance educational equality and quality for all.

4.2.1.1 **Language: English as a medium of instruction**

4.2.1.1.1 **Responses from learners**

The medium of instruction in the school is English and the learners are not allowed to speak Sesotho except during Sesotho class. The learners cannot proceed to the next grade if they fail English. However, it is worth mentioning that most of the learners are Basotho and Sesotho is their mother tongue. The reason that was given to the researcher with regard to punishment of learners speaking Sesotho is that this is a way of ensuring that they practice speaking English to facilitate their embracing it both as an international language and a passing subject. In addition, English is enshrined in the Constitution of Lesotho as one of the two official languages in the country. It is therefore compulsory for learners to perfect their speaking of English.

Despite all the reasons postulated for “forcing” the learners to speak English most of the time at school, the learners had differing views. Most of the Basotho learners interviewed showed that having to be taught in English is a challenge to them as it is not their mother tongue and therefore this affects their learning greatly and affects the quality of their education.

One of the learners said “the fact that at home we speak Sesotho and almost everywhere we speak Sesotho, and being forced to learn in English just because of the foreigners is not fair”. Another learner said “Madam, I speak, eat and play Sesotho and this means even when I think I think in Sesotho so, you see, having to learn in English is not fair to me because I have to translate everything I learn to Sesotho before I can understand”.


Learners also mentioned how having to speak English it affecting their socialization at school. It was noticed that even during play time the Basotho learners preferred to play alone so that they can at least understand each other. The researcher asked one learner why they are not playing with other non-Basotho learners. She said “to tell you the truth, this is the time that one gets relieved from the torture of being confined in English so we are able to communicate freely though we are not allowed to be heard by the prefects or teachers”.

Observations indicated that the language issue also affected the way groups are formed in class as well as participation during group work. The researcher witnessed a lesson in which the teacher was giving learners an exercise to be completed in groups. She allowed the class prefect to make up the groups. It was a challenge for the prefect as most of the Basotho did not want to be in the group of non-Basotho. It was not until the teacher came to the rescue of the prefect and did the task herself that the learners went into those groups. During the activity, in the group where there was non-Basotho, the Basotho learners were very passive and were in fact not participating at all. The non-Basotho learners were in control of the group and made it a point that the task given was completed. One of the Basotho learners, when asked by the researcher why they were not participating, mentioned the fact that “it is not easy to work with these foreigners because they are fluent in English and I feel I cannot work with them because they get angry when I speak in Sesotho and English is difficult”.

In contrast to the above, there were some participants who said that they consider the fact that they are taught in English, especially with those students who are first language speakers of English, as enrichment rather than an inhibiting factor. Two of those respondents said “the fact that I know in class we have these Indians motivates me to push myself to work harder because I know English is an international language which I will use in future”. The other respondent said “I want to go and study medicine overseas and I believe with I cannot do that if I struggle in English so I really like learning in English to practice it”.

Another language issue that came to light, beyond concerns about English being the medium of instruction, was the differing accents of teachers (both foreign and local) and the learners (foreign and local). The manner in which learners speak English as Basotho is different from the way the foreigners do. One of the learner participants said that “I remember this one time I
thought teacher (Zimbabwean) was talking about patter and only to find that he was referring to Peter and we laughed, which really offended our teacher”.

The foreign learners also shared the same view that the differing accents inhibit the learning as they reported that there are times when they did not understand what the teachers and the learners are saying. One of the foreign learners said that “at times this even affects our relationships as I have noticed that the teachers get annoyed as one calls for repetition of some words which we do not comprehend.”

4.2.1.1.2 Responses from teachers

Most Basotho teachers showed that having to use English as a medium of instruction to Basotho learners (for whom English is not their mother tongue) is an inhibiting factor to teach. However, the teachers stated that, to the foreign learners, it seems not to be an issue in fact, it could be one of the reasons that the minority learners out-do the Basotho performance-wise. One Mosotho teacher said “at times it becomes so difficult to explain issues in English; yet I cannot code switch to Sesotho as the foreigners have complained of being discriminated against”. Another foreign teacher said “At times you can even see that they are not getting what you are saying and we normally have to do after school class where then we are able to explain some of the difficult aspects in Sesotho.”

One teacher stressed that the issue of English as the medium of instruction affected teaching planning due to the effect on the overall learning of the difficulty in making use of group work as a tool of learning. The teacher stated that “the Basotho learners really hate working with the non-Basotho just based on the issue of their incompetency to speak fluent English and it is always causing problems”.

The researcher asked one of the teachers if by punishing the learners for speaking Sesotho there is an improvement in their attitude towards English. She said “the honest truth is, it’s not working. We are just doing it with hope that maybe one day they will appreciate their having to learn in English”.

Most of the teachers agreed that it is due to the problem of language of instruction that most of Basotho are reticent in class and that, as a result, they do not perform well when compared to the
minority learners. One foreign teacher stressed the fact that English being a medium of instruction really affects the quality of the education of the Basotho learners who struggle with English. He said “at times when you ask a question, you can see that the learner understands the question and probably has an answer but the problem is expressing them, which at the end of the day affects their performance”. Another teacher said “the use of English extends beyond classroom--but even the way they relate with the foreign learners, as they will have to speak English with them, so they rather opt not to play with them”.

The issue of accent being a hindering factor in the learning environment was raised by one foreign teacher who reported that “the way we speak English is far different from the way Basotho do, so this is also a challenge as at times the learners do not get the words as I am saying them and likewise I do not get some from them.”

4.2.1.1.3 Interpretation and summary

Language and medium of instruction is a crucial part of learning and teaching. It can either inhibit or enhance learning, as was stressed in Chapter 2. Le Roux (2001:55) states (as cited in chapter two) that instruction and learning are socially determined activities influenced by forces such as cultural sentiments, which encompass language. From the findings, it is evident that English being the medium of instruction is an inhibiting factor to Basotho learners. This does not appear to be the case for those who, though not first language speakers of English, use it as a primary means of communication.

Burkett et al (2001:149) undertook a study which showed how English as a medium of instruction can have detrimental consequences for Black students in South African schools. Amongst the conclusions they report, they stated that when a whole education system relies on learning taking place through inadequately mastered second language, the consequences can be seen at personal level, in that it can severely depress the educational achievement of learners. Nieto (2010:116) confirms that it is essential to take into account the fact that learning builds on prior knowledge and experiences but that teachers tend to forget this, with the result that learners may be denied access to their prior learning made through languages other than English.

Research (Nieto 2010, DeCapua & Wintergesrt 2004, and Foflonker 2010) has shown that in most multicultural schools, especially public schools, most of the minority groups are from the
disadvantaged backgrounds. However this is not the case with Maseru High School where the minority group is from an advantaged background. To this group English is not an inhibiting factor in the way that it is to the majority—the Basotho learners.

Most of the learners at the school grow up in communities in which they are not exposed to enough English for the language to qualify convincingly as a language of learning and teaching. This is supported by the responses from the two learners who said they take the issue of having to learn in English as enrichment rather than an inhibiting factor as they want to reach to the standard of those minority learners. The work of Nieto (2010:117) suggests that this attitude that the Basotho learners have is a very disempowering one which normally results in learners—the majority group in this case—thinking that their educational failure comes from their lack of giftedness and low esteem of their social and cultural status.

Oral language also plays an important part in the learning and teaching environment. When referring to oral language, Shanahan and August (2008:29) highlight that phonological awareness is very important in recognizing and producing sounds that make up language. Accent is defined by Foflonker (2010:57) as pronunciation adopted by a speaker that shares characteristics of a certain locality within the community. According to Nieto (2010:156), pronunciation affects the way we communicate, especially if we come from differing geographical locations.

4.2.1.2 Availability and accessibility of learning resources

Research has shown that the lack of English skills alone cannot explain poor academic achievement but rather that mother tongue maintenance can act as a buffer against failure by prompting literacy in children’s most developed language (Banks & Banks 2009:15). One of the factors that were highlighted in this study with regard to educational quality and equality is the availability and accessibility of learning resources.

4.2.1.2.1 Responses from learners

Most of Basotho learners stated that they think they are at a disadvantage as opposed to their counterparts (foreign learners) in terms of their learning as they are not exposed to equal learning
resources. The resource deficits that were mentioned to be the most inhibiting ones are as follows:

- Electricity
- Internet
- Food
- Uniform
- Library and text books
- Financial resources (payment of fees)

One learner said “at times when we are given assignments, I can’t do them at home because I don’t have internet but the others have internet in their homes and therefore they are able to do research which helps them”. Some of the participants stated that they do not have electricity at their homes and “when given assignments it becomes a challenge to do them as they have to use candles and at times that candle is not even there because they cannot afford to buy such”.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has increased the number of child headed households in Lesotho and this came out very clearly as some of the participants stated that coming to school on empty stomachs affects them greatly. One learner captured this challenge in the following statement: “how can I listen in class whilst I am hungry?” This is not the case with the learners’ counterparts who come from well-off families and who do not have to worry about what to eat. One respondent said “it’s worse with me because when I get home I have to go and look for my siblings interests who encompass food and other needs”. Most participants suggested that this greatly impacts on their learning as it affects their concentration levels.

Equality, as suggested by most of the Basotho participants, is not a subject they can talk about because, even though they are in the same classes with the foreign learners, their ability to access the learning materials is limited and, as a result, their studying is greatly affected.

The Basotho participants also talked about their inability to get textbooks as they have to pay for them and most of them suggested that they cannot afford to pay for the fees. One learner respondent said “it is so difficult to expect me to pay fees whilst I come to school on empty stomach”. Clearly, if these learners do not have text books their learning will be greatly inhibited
as they cannot study independently, unlike the foreigner learners who are able to get the required text books on time.

Inaccessibility of the library is another factor that was mentioned by most of the Basotho learner respondents. They stated that they are unable to go to the library as the national library is found in the city and the money required for transport is not available. This therefore means that “we are unable to read extensively like the foreign learners who most of them stay around town and even if not so, they can easily get assistance from parents who will finance their travelling to and fro the library”.

It was noted that the above factors were not inhibiting factors to the learning of the foreign learners, in contrast to the suggestions of most of the Basotho respondents. Most of the foreign learners agreed that they are at an advantage when compared to the locals as most of the locals really struggle in terms of learning materials. One foreign learner stated that “really with us the issue of resources does not affect the quality of education as we have the privilege of being exposed to most of the necessary resources that aid in our learning. For example at home we have internet, and I am able to research even when I am home, which is not the case with our Basotho counterparts”.

4.2.1.2.2 Responses from teachers

Most of teachers stated that equality and quality of education is affected by availability and accessibility of learning and teaching resources. The foreign teachers were of the opinion that they have found it not worthwhile to give learners assignments as most of the time they come to school having not done them. Thus one teacher said “I remember one time when I gave the Form Cs a Development Studies assignment and were supposed to research on the effects of wars on economic development of Africa and really it was only done by not even half of the class as most of them complained that they could not do the research because they did not have internet at home”. This point was supported by the following response: “This makes it difficult for us as teachers to give group tasks because of the inequalities that exist in terms of accessibility to the learning resources, especially if it has to do with take home assignments”. One Mosotho teacher mentioned that it is not only the learners that are affected by the difficulty of exposure to resources but that even the teachers find this issue a challenge. She maintained that she is only
able to do her work properly whilst still at work because “at home I do not have internet and still in the process of trying to connect electricity and therefore I have to prepare in the morning when I arrive here, which makes me to work under a lot of pressure”.

All teachers were of the opinion that another major inhibiting factor towards equality of the education of Basotho learners is poor nutrition. They agreed that most of the learners come to school without having breakfast and these impacts greatly on the way they perform in class. One teacher said “we end up having to share with some of the students some of our lunch boxes because, as a teacher, it touches you to see the learners who are bright but cannot perform due to the burden they are faced with at homes”.

4.2.1.2.3 Interpretation and summary

Research has suggested that in most of multicultural schools the minority learners, who are foreigners in most cases, normally come from under-privileged backgrounds (Nieto 2010, Foflonker 2010, and Pretorius 2000). Bode and Nieto (2008:11) contend that equality and equity are central to multicultural education although there is a distinction in that equity is the process and equality is the result. Equal education means providing the same resources and opportunities for students. Equity goes beyond equality. The authors are of the opinion that all students must be a given real possibility of an equality of outcomes. What was clearly illustrated from the responses of both teachers and learners in this study is that availability and accessibility to resources, which is to a large extent affected by the social class, affects the quality and equality of education.

Even though research suggests that the low class, which is associated with minority group, is the one that is disadvantaged, the findings of this study suggested otherwise. The findings suggested that the majority of the learners are the ones who come from a disadvantaged class of society and are thus not able to access most of the resources that could enhance their learning. This does not only affect the learners but also the teachers, who suggested that, in contrast to foreign teachers, their teaching is also compromised by the fact that they cannot, for example, access internet when at home because there is no electricity at their homes.

Nieto (2010:47) reports that learners who are well endowed in terms of materials and resources achieve better than those who live in poverty and have fewer resources and, as a result, have
fewer opportunities for robust learning. However, she maintains that it should be borne in mind that material resources alone are not the answer to enhancing learning but that there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration to improve on the quality of education of learners.

4.2.1.3 Parental support

Research has shown that parental involvement in their children’s education plays a critical role in academic success (Foflonker 2010, Nieto 2010, Banks & Banks 2009). It has also been suggested that in multicultural schools, parents of the minority groups do not seem to take part and a lot of reasons have been put forward. One such reason is the low educational background of those parents (Foflonker 2010:56).

4.2.1.3.1 Responses from learners

Responses from learners indicated that parental involvement plays a critical role in their learning. The learners indicated that parental support is central to learning and that it becomes difficult to be fully engaged with their learning without the moral support of their parents. One participant captured this so well by stating that “my parents help me with my assignments and this has helped me a lot, especially with math, which I struggle with”. This was highlighted by one foreign learner who suggested that parental support enhanced her learning greatly.

One participant showed how being the head of the family has affected her learning in a negative way, stating that “at times when I get home there is no one to help me with my homework and therefore I struggle a lot”. Another learner participant explained how the lack of parental support affected their learning by stating that “I always envy those with parents especially even during parents meeting as even when we are asked to let our parents to come to school to get our updates there is no one who bothers”. In such circumstances, the teacher feedback has to be given directly to the child himself or herself.

4.2.1.3.2 Responses from teachers

Responses from teachers indicated that parental support was one of the major factors that really affects the quality and equality of the education. The respondents were in one voice on this issue, as the comments of one teacher illustrate. They stated “we cannot over emphasize the
importance of parents having to get involved in the education of their children, as without moral support learning and teaching becomes a challenge”.

The issue raised was that it had always been difficult to get Basotho parents involved in their children’s education. This was highlighted by the following teacher response: “it has always been a problem for Basotho parents to be fully involved with their children’s education and this affects the learning and teaching because, believe me, even if you ask them to come to school to discuss the learners progress, they come up with all sorts of excuses”.

Most of the teacher respondents considered the lack of parental involvement a problem, but, as one respondent reported, “this is now even worse with the increase of child headed households”. This issue of child headed households negatively impacting on the quality of education was highlighted by the following statements. One teacher said “it is always so touching to see this children come to school late because they had no one to help them prepare for school” and another reported that “at times we have to even make contributions to ensure that these children do learn, but it is not easy, believe me”.

Positive benefits of parental involvement in the education of their children were manifested by the following teacher responses. One said: “you know when parents are involved in their children’s learning, they are so concerned with their children’s progress and are always in contact with us and this makes it so easy for us as teachers”. This parental approach, according to respondents, is typical of the foreign parents, who were commended. As the teacher said “as a teacher you get motivated to see students having completed take-home assignments with the help of parents. That’s why I said they make life so easy”.

4.2.1.3.3 Interpretation and summary

Most participants were of the opinion that parental involvement plays a critical role in the provision of quality and equal education. What was very clear from the responses was that Basotho parents are very minimal engaged in their children’s education as opposed to the foreign parents. The problem was also seen to be exacerbated by the issue of child headed households due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
The positive benefits of parents being involved in their children’s education were stressed, as it was reported that this could really enhance the learning of the students. The issue of parental involvement is captured by Foflonker (2010:94) who suggested that parental commitment to children’s education is key to success at school. She reiterates that there is a strong connection between student’s success and parental involvement in the children’s education.

4.2.2 **Intercultural experiences that inhibit or enhance unfair discrimination**

The Constitution of Lesotho Chapter 2 section 18 states that no one will be afforded different treatment mainly because of birth, race, origin, language, religion, etc. This section discusses how the intercultural experiences between teachers and learners inhibit or enhance unfair discrimination.

4.2.2.1 Responses from learners

Although most of the learners were in agreement that they have not experienced any discrimination as they would understand it to be, there were some who suggested that the teachers tend to give more attention to the foreigners and the exceptionally performing Basotho learners. However, it was clear that the learners were not aware, or rather confused, as to what discrimination refers to. It was necessary therefore to explain to the learners what was being referred to by the term discrimination.

It was after some deliberations then that some of the Basotho students stated that “*even though we cannot say we are discriminated against but we have seen that our teachers pay more attention to the foreigners as they are better performers than us*”. One other Mosotho learner said “*at times when we do not understand, the teachers do not bother about us but would rather say we should refer to those foreign students and I really do not like this*”.

The researcher probed the issue of discrimination further and found that the learners were of the opinion that they can sense that social background plays a role in the way the teachers are treating them. One Mosotho learner said “*the fact that teachers know that this foreigners are from well off families, they offer them special treatment as opposed to us. That is why they say we should get clarity from them where we do not understand*”. However, on this point there was the sense of a contradictory statement from the same learner who said “*though it is nice to have*
these foreigners in class because they are more focused than us, they are treated better as opposed to us”.

The foreign learners were of the opinion that there is still some discrimination happening in school in the form of name calling by other students. This was highlighted by the learner who said “it is so painful when you hear people calling you names like Mokoerekoere and you do not even understand what it means”. The researcher happened to hear some Basotho learners during play time complaining about the foreign nations who think they are better and the researcher heard then the mention of the word Mokoerekoere. The researcher tried to get the learners to explain what it means but they did not know. However, they knew it referred to some African nationals who are darker skinned than them.

Language was mentioned as one of the factors perpetuating discrimination. The foreign learners interviewed were of the opinion that they appreciate the fact that Basotho are not fluent in English but, nonetheless, found it completely unacceptable for them to speak Sesotho in the midst of other learners who cannot comprehend. One of the learners said “even though I understand we are in Lesotho, I do not like the idea of Basotho teachers speaking Sesotho in class whilst we are there because this makes us feel out of place”. Another foreign learner said, “You know it’s such a warm place but annoys me when they speak Sesotho and it makes it worse when they laugh in our presence knowing exactly that we do not get what they are saying”. Similarly, a further foreign leaner “you know it is very irritating when they laugh yet we cannot get a thing of what was said, I feel much disrespected by the teacher, though I cannot complain and this to me is discrimination”.

4.2.2.2 Responses from teachers

Most teachers were of the opinion that there was no discrimination that they experience or have witnessed to be taking place at the school, although one teacher reported she has encountered some complaints from learners who mentioned that they are not being treated equally as learners. She however mentioned that “the Basotho learners have complained that they are not being treated fairly as opposed to the non-Basotho and they say it is because they are from poor families”. She reported that she tried to address the issue but could not get any substantiating
facts. However, she maintained that “I cannot say it is happening or not but what I sensed was the issue of low self-esteem on the part of our learners”.

The above sentiments were refuted by the foreign teachers who mentioned the issue of name calling amongst the learners, which extended to themselves as teachers. One foreign teacher said “we have accepted that they call us all sorts of names like Mokoerekoere which we do not even get what it means”. On seeking clarity as to who calls the teachers names the foreign teachers were of the opinion that both learners and teachers do likewise. They were of the opinion that the discrimination is not so prevalent but it needs to be addressed to allow for better interaction between the learners and teachers from the different cultures.

The foreign teachers also mentioned the issue of language to be a challenge. One respondent mentioned that “it is so disturbing to have to attend meetings as, at times, the teachers will just start communicating in Sesotho and we cannot understand a thing, which is a challenge to us”

4.2.2.3 Interpretation and summary

Though a lot of contradictions were identified in the statements given by the respondents, especially the learners, it became apparent that there was some discrimination that was identified to be happening in the school. The issue of language seems to be the most persistent one in the case of foreign learners, whereas the Basotho learners were of the opinion that their social background is playing a role in their being discriminated against by the teachers. In addition, name calling was identified as one of the factors affecting the relationships at school. This ultimately inhibits learning.

4.2.3 Intercultural experiences that inhibit or enhance respect for humanity

Respect for humanity implies being treated with dignity that one has by virtue of being human. Foflonker (2010:56) suggests that respect for humanity entail respecting one another and also fostering mutual understanding. She states that where there are people from different cultures, there is always a challenge with regard to respecting others. Intercultural experiences and how they inhibit or enhance respect for humanity are discussed.
4.2.3.1 Responses from learners

As an introduction to this discussion, the researcher asked the participants what they understanding were on the statement respect for humanity. Most of the participants were in agreement that the statement suggests the right to be treated equally by virtue of being human beings. They also agreed that the idea of respect for humanity and unfair discrimination are somehow linked. Some respondents suggested that “there is no way someone could not discriminate against yet treat me with all the respect I have by just being a human being”.

The foreign learners were adamant that the issue of name calling was really inhibiting their learning. One foreign learner said “I do not see any signs of respect in people calling others names and in fact this affects one’s self-confidence and esteem”. The issue was stressed by one learner who cited one incident “where I proposed to a Mosotho girl in our class and I was so humiliated by the Basotho boys who learnt that I was proposing to the girl and they asked me if I think she could fall for a Mokoerekoere, and this really hurt me a lot and I have sworn to God to never propose to any local girl. But it is making our lives so difficult”. The learners however mentioned that it is not all Basotho that call them names and in fact one learner said that “Basotho are a friendly nation but there are those ones who can just be bad”.

Respect for humanity, according to the learners, applies to the issue of language “where people can just decide to speak in the language they know very well that you cannot understand”. The issue of language was mentioned to be a major factor that seems to cut across or perpetuate most of the problems. However there was an argument pertaining to the same issue where some Basotho respondents were of the opinion that “being allowed to speak my language in my view is promoting respect for humanity and I believe all of us need to be allowed to speak whatever language they are comfortable in and I see that I am not being respected if I am forced to speak in English which I struggle to do and others because it is their language laugh at us when we get it wrong.”

In contrast to the above, there were others who maintained that speaking in a common language, and moreover an international one like English, really enhances their learning and respect for humanity. One respondent said “I think speaking English is to a large extent promoting respect for humanity because it is an official language and all of us can understand it. I would have a
problem if we were forced to speak in any other language except the two official languages. Then I would say respect for humanity is being inhibited”.

4.2.3.2 Responses from teachers

Teachers were of the view that they always make it a point that they instil in the learners that they respect each other. One teacher even stressed that they punish the learners who mistreat each other. She stated that “the prefects are also responsible in ensuring that the learners treat each other well”. One foreign teacher suggested that he feels the school is doing well in that regard and he highlighted the issue of punishment for any incidences of maltreatment having contributed a lot towards that. However, he was quick to also stress that “the culture of respect amongst us as teachers has really influenced our learners”.

One other teacher stated that the parents should also teach their children the principle of respect because “the children imitate what they see from parents”.

4.2.3.3 Interpretation and summary

All of the respondents were in agreement that respect for humanity referred to the fact that people need to be respected and treated like humans just by virtue of being humans. The respondents were of the opinion that name calling impedes achieving respect for humanity. Stuart (2003:56) suggests that “every man, whatever his skin colour has blood running through his veins”. This means that there is no one who has to be subjected to maltreatment because we are all human. There was a general idea that the choice of language in communication and learning also plays a role in the inhibiting of the respect for humanity, although there were some who saw it as an enhancement. This was expressed by the responses that people should be allowed to speak the two official languages of Lesotho and English should still be maintained as it is an international language.

4.2.4 Intercultural experiences that inhibit or enhance tolerance towards each other

Tolerance is an attitude and it is often taught (Foflonker 2010:56). She further suggests that being tolerant of each other means that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and should
also treat other with the same respect. The section discusses the intercultural experience and how they either inhibit or enhance tolerance towards each other.

4.2.4.1 Responses from learners

There were some learner respondents who were of the view that there are instances where tolerance towards each other is really being inhibited and there are some instances where some felt that it is being enhanced. Activities that were mentioned as enhancing tolerance towards each other include discussions, group work and debate exercises. These views were supported by responses such as the following. On learner said that “during discussions we learn to listen to one another and defend the point of view without being attacking another person” and another reported that “discussions are best in testing our tolerance towards each other, however I think they are best if monitored by a teacher”.

The argument that discussions enhance tolerance was upheld by most learner responses, although most responses identified the necessity of the teacher monitoring the activity. The other experience that was mentioned to enhance tolerance towards each other is group work.

Most of the respondents were of the opinion that group work is one effective exercise that enhances tolerance towards each other. One learner said “when we are in groups we have to listen to the group leader and do the tasks as we are given and it is always a challenge. But because we know if we do not cooperate we will be punished we seem to be working harmoniously most of the time”. Even though there was a general agreement that group work does enhance tolerance towards each other, some respondents lamented that “I differ with some of my colleagues in that I believe the group work can only enhance tolerance towards one another only if we are allowed to speak our mother tongues. So if we are forced to speak English we tend to not fully participate but rather look up to those who are English speakers”.

Another activity that was mentioned by most respondents as one to enhance tolerance towards each other is involvement in sporting activities. All of the learners shared the view that sporting activities really enhance their tolerance towards one another. In this respect one respondent stated that “during soccer practice and games, I know we are all working towards one goal and so we are able to put aside our differences and it always a pleasure when we win”. Team work and team building were seen as some of the positive outcomes of learners engaging in sports.
which were therefore identified as central towards promoting tolerance towards other people. They also proposed “involvement of all the learners in the differing sporting codes”.

4.2.4.2 Responses from teachers

Most teachers were of the view that activities that enhance tolerance towards each other as teachers, as well as towards the learners, include the group work activities, debate activities and sports. All of the teachers were adamant that sports play a great role in fostering tolerance towards one another. As one teacher pointed out “sports really help in promoting the activities that are part of the hidden curriculum, which undoubtedly play a central role in the performance and socialization of the learners”.

Most of the teacher respondents were of the view that most of the activities that happen in class become effective only if “us, as teachers, we monitor them because, you know, the students can be cruel to others and therefore, for example, group work can be messy if we do not guide our learners and ensure that they really enhance tolerance towards each other, rather than the negative effects that could be manifested if not dealt well”. There were some teachers who mentioned the fact that negative attitude of learners really inhibit their tolerance towards each other. One teacher said “sometimes it’s not really about the activities that happen in class. It’s about attitudes that the learners have towards each that inhibit their tolerance and this is perpetuated further by low self-esteem that most of the learners have”.

4.2.4.3 Interpretation and summary

Most of the respondents were in agreement that the activities and experiences that enhance tolerance towards each other include discussions that take place in class. In addition, group work activities were also mentioned as capable of enhancing tolerance. All of the respondents were of the view that sports play a central role because of their role in promoting team work.

There was however a mention of the issue of attitudinal influences which often make it difficult for individuals to tolerate others where low self-esteem plays a role in negative attitudes towards anything and everything.
4.2.5 Strategies to enhance optimal teaching and learning

The following analysis of reports of the strategies appropriate to enhance optimal teaching and learning were obtained from the focus group discussions and interviews from teachers and learners.

4.2.5.1 Responses from learners

This section will discuss in detail the strategies that can be used to enhance optimal teaching and learning as suggested by the learners.

4.2.5.1.1 Repetition of lessons

The repetition of lessons to enhance optimal learning was stressed by most Basotho learners because of the fact, as they had made clear, that the medium of instruction is a great barrier to their learning. The importance of teachers repeating lessons were mentioned to be rewarding not only to the Basotho but also the first speakers of English. A learner stated that “it will be to the advantage to all of us for teachers to repeat lessons probably at the beginning of each following lesson so that at least with us who struggle with English we can be sure that we got exactly that was taught”. Another respondent suggested that repeating lessons “will in turn benefit all of us as I think it will do no harm to be part of the lesson being repeated than to be left behind also”.

In contrast to the above, some learners were of the opinion that “this should not be a must, but rather the teacher should assess us and if the topic we were doing is difficult then it can be repeated because I know some of us are going to play with the hope that the lessons will be repeated”. There was a sense that repeating lessons will not be beneficial if the language used is not understood by the learners. One learner, on talking on the issue, said “what use will it be if the teacher will still be using the difficult language she used firstly? We need them to speak in Sesotho where we do not understand”.

Other strategy learners identified to enhance learning related to the manner in which teachers speak. Responses of the learners were that “it is important for teachers to speak slowly and practice pausing generously between the sentences to allow us, the second speakers of English, to digest and get the message”. Other participants were of the opinion that “teachers should use simple sentences and also explain unfamiliar words at the start of the lesson so that, as the
lesson goes on, we do not disturb the flow of the lesson by asking for explanation of words”. All of the participants were in agreement that this strategy is paramount for effective learning to both Basotho and non-Basotho, as the issue of medium of instruction is central to whether learning becomes successful.

4.2.5.1.2 Engaging in sporting activities

The learners were of the view that being allowed to engage in different sporting activities can promote oneness and tolerance towards one another. One learner, in reiterating on the importance of engaging in sports, said “hey...sports are important in promoting oneness amongst us and this instil in us the principles of respect and tolerance towards each other”. However there was concern that most of the time the foreign learners do not take part in sports and this makes it difficult for them to get to know each other in a relaxed setting. One other respondent said “we normally feel that sports are for us only because the foreigners do not take part in them”.

The researcher observed a scenario where there was athletics practice and, indeed, there were no foreigners participating in that session. Even though it was winter, there was an athletic tournament that was to happen as a roundup of the first round hence the learners were preparing. The researcher asked for the reason for that and the answer obtained was that although there were no foreign learners who were taking part in athletics they were involved in other sports, like chess and softball.

4.2.5.1.3 Being appreciated by teachers/fair treatment to all

The learners were of the view that teachers need to show appreciation for all the learners, regardless of their circumstances, so that they can feel they are loved and the teachers have trust in them. One learner, in stressing this issue, said “I believe even though we come from different family backgrounds we expect our teachers to motivate us to perform well regardless of the fact that we come from poor families”.

One learner respondent described a scenario in which she made him feel depressed and she said if the teacher had dealt with it otherwise she would have taken it differently. She said
I remember this other time when we were given homework and I really struggle with Math, and unfortunately I do not have anyone to help me at home as I am the eldest. So I did five questions out of seven and I got them right but instead of our teacher congratulating me she gave me all sorts of negative remarks like: if you will pass this year, I doubt it because you are not serious, and this hit hard on me because I knew some of the learners were assisted by their parents and maybe if I had parents too I could have done well.

Another learner said motivation without fair treatment is difficult to maintain, She explained that “I believe we need to be treated fairly and this can be seen only if our teachers can also seem to be giving equal attention to all of us in class, regardless of our backgrounds, intellectual ability and or language limitations.”

On stressing the issue of teachers ensuring that learners feel safe to learn, one learner said “I remember this other time when I was asked a question in class and I apparently used a wrong tense and the learners laughed and from that day I felt embarrassed to participate in class. But I think if the teacher had guarded against such that would not have happened. That is why I maintain it is the teacher’s responsibility to offer a safe learning environment”.

4.2.5.1.4 English being an elective subject

There was a general feeling by most learners that English should not be regarded as a passing subject as this was highlighted to be one of the factors that inhibit effective learning. For example, one learner said “you know madam; we cannot say English is not important because we have seen that it is an international language. But really it gets in our way in as a far as our future is concerned. It should be taught but not be regarded as a passing subject because, hey, we struggle with the Queen’s language”.

There were conflicting statements in as far as the use of English in class is concerned. Some learners were of the opinion that teachers should be in a position to teach in Sesotho, especially where they see learners cannot understand. Other learners were of the opinion that, even though teachers should teach in English, it should not be a passing subject. One Mosotho learner, when discussing the issue, said “it would be so unfair to other foreign learners to be taught in Sesotho,
but I agree with the idea that English should not be a passing subject, because, to us, it is not our first language, as opposed to the foreign learners”.

4.2.5.1.5 Unlimited access to internet and library

There were some learners who were of the opinion that the library should be accessible to them at all times as this will allow them to study, even after school. One learner said “I think it will be to the benefit of all of us to have access to the library, even after school, because if we do not, we are not able to study well at home, as we do not have the textbooks and the internet at home”.

However, there was a concern on the issue of the protection of the library during after-school hours and some learners were of the opinion that it might not be feasible to open the library for extra hours as there will be no one to safeguard the equipment. On the question of whether they could take responsibility for the protection of the equipment themselves, as it would be for their own good, there were conflicting responses. Some learners were adamant that they cannot take responsibility for the library equipment, whereas others were of the view that they need to take responsibility for the equipment if they really want to learn after hours.

One learner, who supported the idea of learners taking responsibility for protection of the equipment, said “it is really up to us to make sure that we protect our stuff as it is for our good and I believe we need to convince our teachers that we can be entrusted with the protection of our stuff so that we can be able to access the internet even after hours”. A learner who was against the proposed solution said “once we agree to this we are going to be held responsible for anything that might go wrong after hours and I know these students, they will steal the computers so that we can be in trouble so I don’t wanna be part of that. We will access the internet during school hours and then those who want to research after school can go to internet cafes”
4.2.5.2 Responses from teachers

Strategies that can be used to enhance optimal teaching and learning as discussed by teachers will be given.

4.2.5.2.1 Creation of social and reading clubs

The creation of social and reading clubs was one of the strategies that were mentioned by most respondents during both the interviews and focus group discussions as one of the strategies that could enhance learning and teaching. The respondents highlighted the positive effects such clubs could have on the learning environment. One teacher stressed the importance of the clubs by suggesting that “these clubs will certainly promote socialization beyond classroom, which enhances the good relations between the learners”.

In maintaining that good interpersonal relations are crucial for a positive learning environment, one teacher stated that “ummm...it goes without saying that good interpersonal relations between learners are a very essential ingredient towards tolerance towards one another and thereby making our job so much easier”. These responses also reinforced the importance of social clubs by suggesting that, as one teacher declared, “social clubs will ensure that group work and cooperative learning is enhanced in school and this will promote peaceful living amongst the learners and of course teachers”.

One teacher said “my thinking is that social clubs can help in dealing with the issue of name-calling, which I have seen negatively impacts on the self-esteem of others, which in turn affects the way we perform in class and even the way we interact outside class. Because in clubs we become ourselves and therefore will be able to share our experiences and challenges in a relaxed manner without the confines of any teacher to rule us”.

However, there were contradictory views as to how the social clubs would be formed and some teachers were of the opinion that “as teachers we should be part of those clubs as this will show commitment from us and our willingness to be part of the learners”. In contrast to this view, some of the teachers suggested that the learners should be at liberty to choose whoever they want to be part of the club so that a club is not dictated by teachers. It was stated that “this will instil
some sense of responsibility in all of them, to ensure that they deal with whatever conflicts may arise on their own”.

Most teachers were in agreement that the reading clubs will also improve the learner’s interest in reading, which can deal with the problem of reading and speaking English. However, there were contradicting views on whether the reading clubs will only focus on English materials or books. Some teachers were of the view that “since most of the learners struggle with English, the clubs will help as they can be able to share with the other learners who are first speakers in an informal setting”.

4.2.5.2.2 Creation of safe learning environment

Creating a safe learning environment was mentioned as one of the strategies that could enhance teaching and learning. Most teachers were of the view that the positive outcomes of a safe learning environment cannot be overlooked as it motivates the learners and teachers to interact and participate fully, without fear. Some of the teachers responses that supported the statement include that “it is up to us as teachers to ensure that we create a learning environment that is safe for all to engage to the utmost capability and this, I believe depends on the creativity of each teacher”. Another teacher, supporting the view that the creation of safe learning environment is the responsibility of teachers, suggested that “as a teacher, it is imperative to make sure that the learning environment is conducive for learning”.

The researcher asked how such an environment can be created. One teacher said “as was mentioned that it depends on the creativity of each teacher, I suggest setting the rules is one other way we can do, and some of the rules you can do with the learners themselves. For example, that it is a must that we respect each other’s opinion and we are not to laugh at any one, even if we feel they are giving a wrong statement.

Another teacher stated that “when setting the rules in class it also instils in the learners sense of responsibility as the punishments will also be given by them and this is very good way of creating a safe learning environment”. A further response from a teacher suggested “making use of icebreakers is one other way we can use to ensure that the learning environment is safe and this one even makes the class to be very entertaining as well and this one does require the teachers’ ability to innovate and initiate such”.

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There was a strong feeling from most teachers that responsibility for the creation of a safe learning environment does not only rest on the teachers only. Teachers stressed that the learners are part of the decisions made in class because, as one teacher put it, “learners are as much responsible for the creation of safe learning environment as us and I believe we need to ensure that they take responsibility for everything that happens in class”.

4.2.5.2.3 Acknowledging, valuing and celebrating cultural differences

All of the participants were of the view that it is vital for the school to acknowledge, value and celebrate the cultural differences that exist within the school. There was general agreement that most of the factors that were mentioned in the in the earlier sections on intercultural differences stemmed from the different cultures that exist within the school. The issue of lack of appreciation that the entire school population is made of different cultures was raised. It was acknowledged that there has been a practice of overlooking the minority cultures and celebrating Sesotho culture only.

One of the teacher respondents mentioned that, since at school they already have a cultural day, it would be “vital to allow all learners to celebrate their cultural heritage by allowing them to wear their attire and maybe even allow the minority to bring their traditional food during that day”. One teacher suggested that this will “lead to acceptance and tolerance towards each other”.

Another way of celebrating the different cultures, as identified by a learner, would be through “teaching each other about the different cultural practices and not just concentrating on Sesotho only as if it’s the only culture that exist within the school”. A teacher confirmed the view that teaching each other about the different cultures is critical for dealing with the issue of tolerance and respect for humanity, saying that “at times it is only a matter of ignorance that leads to people not treating each other well—just thinking their culture is superior than the other. But by exchanging experiences and knowledge about each other we will start to appreciate each other. Hence learning will be more effective and of course enhanced”.

It also emerged the issue of name calling could be dealt with if teachers could adopt using the names of students when calling them, as part of celebrating the different cultures. One teacher emphasized on the positive benefits of using learners’ names when calling them when she said
“it is very crucial to use the learner’s names when talking to them as a way of instilling in them that we are different yet we are the same”. This also can instil the sense of respect of other individuals, allowing the issues of discrimination and respect for humanity to be better dealt with.

4.2.5.2.4 Motivating learners

Motivation was regarded by most respondents as one of the strategies that can be used to enhance learning in any circumstance. Most respondents were of the view that motivation is one aspect of life that pushes a person to unleash his/her potential, regardless of the barriers. One respondent said “motivation is what can boost our learner’s self-confidence and esteem and we really need to show our learners that we they believe they can do well”. Another teacher said “motivation is what can drive our learners to stretch themselves regardless of the challenges they are faced with in terms of their learning”.

Teachers were also of the view that it is imperative to motivate their learners for them to perform well in class. One teacher said “as teachers we tend to focus on the learners who are extroverts and this demotivates the introverts, hence some end up being passive in class”. One respondent in addressing same issue stated that “as teachers we have become so lazy that we have really forgotten the basics of teaching, which also include playing a parenthood role, and I believe if we understand that we can never go without reaffirming our student’s capabilities and acknowledging their hard work”.

Further support for the benefits of motivating learners came from a respondent who said “we are dealing with most learners who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, who at times doubt their self-worth, and this negatively impacts on their learning; and I believe the only way we can boost their self-esteem and confidence is only through acknowledging their small efforts and reaffirming them that they can still do better regardless of the circumstances”. Another teacher said “as teachers it is very vital to have high expectations of our learners and this should be known to them because I sincerely believe it is only through our learners knowing that we believe they can do better that we can enhance the learning attitude they have”.

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4.2.5.2.5 Monitoring of classroom dynamics

The monitoring of classroom dynamics was one strategy that was advanced by most teachers as a means of enhancing optimal teaching and learning. They were of the view that classroom dynamics need to be monitored if they are to ensure that learning is of quality. In arguing this point, the respondents suggested that, by virtue of having diverse classes, they need to invest extra effort to ensure that the classroom dynamics do not interfere with learning.

Illustrating the negative impacts that unmonitored group dynamics could have on the learning and teaching environment, one respondent advised that “in classes where there is no monitoring of the dynamics in class, one would find that some of the shy students will shy away forever and stop participating in any activities in class”. Another respondent said “it is where there is no monitoring that bullying and teasing happen and it is therefore up to us as teachers to ensure that we deal with this in a firm manner”.

In advocating for the strategy further, one respondent declared that “monitoring classroom dynamics is crucial and is the basis for group work which we struggle a lot with due to learner’s attitudes towards each other”. Another teacher in suggested that “as teachers, one way of dealing with classroom dynamics is by responding timeously to the non-academic experiences, as teasing of other learners by others, as this negatively impacts on the learners performance”. It was maintained by another respondent that if group dynamics are monitored “this will allow learners to interact without any fear of being ridiculed and I think this also goes together with a safe learning environment.

4.2.5.2.6 Training on cultural diversity, including communication

Even though the training on cultural diversity as a strategy to enhance teaching and learning was not popular amongst the participants, the researcher though it was worth mentioning because of some of the experiences and observations the researcher had whilst at school. The strategy was suggested a number of foreign teachers. They were of the view that there is still some training that is needed to capacitate the teachers in dealing with diverse classrooms.

On the subject of cultural diversity training, one foreign teacher said “I have noticed that most of the teachers are lacking in the area of cultural maturity, if I may say, and I strongly believe it is
through training that this can be achieved”. Another respondent, illustrating the importance of such training, said “because of the nature of the country, where the population is Basotho with limited other nationalities, most of the teachers and learners I have seen are challenged in dealing with people different from them, especially where it has got to do with speaking any language other than Sesotho and I believe they strongly need to be given skills which are necessary in this new era, where we talk of a global village”.

In highlighting the short comings of the lack of the cultural diversity training one foreign teacher said “it is true we need to be trained to deal with the diverse cultures in school, as most of us were not given such training in our institutions when we did teacher training, so it will benefit us and, of course, the learners”. One other teacher maintained that “we cannot shy away from the fact that our initial training did not prepare us to deal with these kind of situations and we have seen that with the developments we are still going to have more foreign learners and teachers and if we are not capacitated we are going to encounter a lot of challenges”.

There was also a mention of including cultural diversity in the curriculum for the learners. One teacher argued that “even if we can be trained, I still maintain that our learners need to be capacitated also in being able to deal with learners and teachers from different cultures as it will help them when they venture into the other countries and even whilst still here at home”. Another teacher added to consideration of the issue by asking “what will happen after we are trained if we cannot transfer the knowledge to our learners? I think it will therefore make sense to also include the subject on cultural diversity in the curriculum”.

4.2.5.2.7 More advocacy for parental involvement

The teachers were of the view that without parental involvement learning really becomes an uphill battle for the learners. Most of them were in agreement that the positive benefits of parental involvement in their children’s education had been seen with the success of the foreigner learners. One teacher said “I can’t even stress how important it is for parents to get involved in their children’s education as they really help us”. Most teachers were in agreement that they have to make it their project to ensure that they advocate for the Basotho parents to take part in their children’s education, as they will then be able to see what challenges their children are going through and where they can help.
There was consensus amongst most of the teachers that they have to strategise to try to put the parents on board as “we cannot really do it by ourselves”. There was, however, a feeling that it was also going to be a challenge to increase parental support, especially for those children without parents. However, some respondents stressed that the guardians also need to be sensitized on the importance of their involvement in the children’s education without necessarily making them think that it has to do with financial resources only.

4.2.5.3 Interpretation and summary

What emerged clearly from the responses of both teachers and learners is that motivation and fair treatment of learners by teachers is critical for effective teaching and learning. Even though they put it in different ways, there was a strong feeling that self-confidence and esteem can be affected by unfair treatment.

Research has shown that motivation is important for narrowing the achievement gap (Nieto 2010:46). She is of the opinion that the high expectations that the teachers have of the students are central to increased achievement of students. On the other hand, research indicates that most of the time teachers have low expectations of minority learners (Foflonker 2002:56). The situation in Lesotho is different as the minority learners are the ones of whom the teachers have high expectations, as opposed to the majority.

The issue of the use of English as the language of instruction and its effect on learning was also stressed. In this respect, it was suggested that English should not be regarded as a passing subject. There were also some suggestions to ensure that there is some improvement in the usage of English, including the creation of social and reading clubs.

Language is part of culture (Nieto 2010:116, Appelbaum 2002:54) and language diversity needs to be appreciated. This has been stressed by Nieto (2010:116) who she contends that education of language minority students is part and parcel of multicultural education. There is evidence that if the languages students speak as their first languages are negated the possibility of school failure is increased (DeCapua & Wintergerst 2004:106, Nieto 2010:116, Appelbaum 2002:54).

In promoting good relationships between learners and teachers, there was strong support for engagement in sporting activities and creation of social and reading clubs. These were mentioned
as ways of dealing with attitude problems amongst the learners. In addition the creation of safe learning environments was mentioned as another strategy that can be used to ensure that participation by learners is enhanced.

Most teachers were of the view that they need to do more to sensitise parents to the value of taking part in their children’s education as they are able to fill the gaps and even add value to the education. The idea of celebrating and acknowledging the different cultures that exist in or make up the whole school community was stressed as another strategy that can enhance learning. Lastly the issue of training for teachers was also one strategy that was highlighted as most teachers were of the feeling that they were not fully prepared for diverse classrooms and hence they believe they are not performing optimally in as far as teaching is concerned.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the research. The findings included responses from learners and teachers during interview and observations that were made by the researcher. The findings were analysed according to the three questions that were used for interviews: the intercultural experiences that inhibit or enhance quality and equal education, respect for humanity, unfair discrimination and tolerance towards one another. The responses from this question were analysed, together with those from the second question which related to the factors that inhibit or enhance learning and teaching in a multicultural classroom, and, lastly, consideration of the strategies that could be used to enhance learning and teaching.

Chapter five will be devoted to presenting the conclusions drawn from the interpretations of the findings and then recommendations will be made. The limitations of the study will be presented and, lastly, the recommendations for future research will be discussed.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the quest for establishing the link between intercultural differences and optimal teaching and learning environment in schools around Maseru, a qualitative case study was conducted at Maseru High School. After data collection, analysis and interpretation, conclusions were drawn based on the responses to research questions that guided the whole process. This chapter therefore concludes the study and includes the summary discussion of the findings. Lastly, the chapter presents recommendations for future research and promotion of intercultural education in Lesotho schools.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions will be based on the statements that were used in the discussion of findings, however for the strategies, three themes emerged which are classroom environment, school environment and home environment.

5.2.1 Intercultural experiences that enhance or inhibit educational equality and quality for all.

5.2.1.1 Medium of instruction

There were a number of factors that were considered to be important in their effect on educational equality and quality for all. Firstly, the issue of the medium of instruction was widely cited as one of the major factors that hinder the provision of quality education for all. It was evident from the responses that the issue of English as a medium of instruction and as a passing subject greatly affects the way learners perform. This is because majority of the learners and teachers in this case are first language speakers of Sesotho not English.

In their responses, the Basotho learners indicated that their learning is affected by their language of instruction being English. They reported that they felt this puts them at a disadvantage, as
opposed to the foreign learners who are first language speakers of English. Most of them felt that they are being subjected to enormous pressure to have to learn in English; they felt that their being Basotho is not being considered and they felt that if they were to learn in Sesotho they would perform better.

A strong association and link between learners’ performance and the medium of instruction has been researched and documented by researchers and cognitive psychologists who have strongly argued that learning builds on prior knowledge and experiences. In consequence, the importance of the use of learners’ first language in the learning and teaching environment cannot be overemphasized (Banks & Banks 2009:116, Pretorius 2000:56). Banks and Banks (2009:116) assert that if the languages students speak, with all their attendant social meanings and affirmations, are either relegated or negated to a secondary position in their schooling, the possibility of school failure is increased. The authors further maintain that this way of learning goes against how learning takes place and the crucial role played by language.

However it should be noted that all of the learner respondents are aware of the fact that English is an international language and that it is to their advantage to perfect it, as it will open doors for them in future. The argument is that they should be allowed to use their first language in their learning if we are to talk about equality and quality education for all. However, there was no clear indication as to whether the teachers punishing the students when speaking English has a positive effect or not because the respondents were somehow sceptical in that regard.

The issue of language being a barrier to learning goes beyond the classroom walls as it also affects the way the learners socialize. During the study, it was observed that during breaks the Basotho learners generally chose not to play with foreign learners, reportedly because of the language barrier. Most of the Basotho learners interviewed were of the view that they do not feel comfortable playing with foreigners as this means they have to speak English.

The reluctance to socialize exhibited by both Basotho and English first language learners is also evident from the responses of foreign learners. They indicated that even though English is the only language learners are allowed to speak in school (except during Sesotho class), the Basotho learners speak Sesotho during breaks, resulting in the foreign learners feeling out of place. This
dynamic was also observed during group work sessions and assignments, in which Basotho learners preferred to work on their own and the foreigners likewise.

In research this has been referred to as withdrawal. Min Jeong (2008:34) is of the opinion that people withdraw from intercultural encounters once they do not have a sense of belonging to the other cultures and do not find similarities. Foflonker (2010:55) suggests that people withdraw from intercultural exchanges because of stereotyping and prejudices. Unlike the findings of Foflonker (2010:55), this study found that language appeared to be a major barrier to intercultural communication between learners and not necessarily prejudices or stereotypes.

Interestingly, there was one finding of the study which challenges the claims of most of the research that has been done on multicultural/intercultural education. Most studies have shown that the minority groups of learners are regarded as inferior as they are from disadvantaged backgrounds, normally of migrant origin (as discussed in Chapter 2). The study found that in the case of Maseru High School the minority are, on the contrary, the privileged group and therefore are seen as a source of enrichment rather than as having a negative impact. This was evident from most responses of teachers who suggested that, because of their backgrounds and their English capability, the foreign learners often assist other learners where there is a need. This could also explain why the withdrawal by Basotho learners from the foreigners is neither due to stereotypes nor prejudices but rather reflects the issue of language.

5.2.1.2 Availability and accessibility of learning resources

It was evident from the responses that the availability and accessibility of learning and teaching resources play a role in the provision of equal and quality education for all. The link that was made in this regard was with low income, unemployment, low educational levels of parents and the scourge of HIV/AIDS which has led to most of the Basotho learners to take on the role of head their own families.

Resources that were mentioned as affecting the quality of education include electricity, textbooks, internet accessibility, and food. The respondents indicated that access to the aforementioned resources affects the way they learn as these are the basic resources that aid in their learning.
The Basotho learners, as opposed to their foreign counterparts, are at a disadvantage because of the circumstances they live under. For example, unavailability of electricity makes it difficult for them to complete assignments at home as they will have to use a candle, which strains the eyes. The lack of access to resources is interlinked. For example, if there is no electricity it is extremely difficult to have internet. Also poor nutrition, which was widely reported by Basotho learners, greatly affects the way learners perform at school.

The reported situation of Basotho learners is in contrast to that of the foreign learners, most of who are from well-off families who can afford well-balanced diets. From the discussion that the researcher had with the headmaster, it was very clear that there were a lot of Basotho learners at the school who were double orphans and who had taken on the role of head of household. The headmaster affirmed that their lives are difficult due to shortage of food and other basic needs.

Research has shown that there are a variety of factors that affect teaching and learning, especially in multicultural settings (Banks & Banks 2009:117, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings 2004:184). Nieto (2010:46) suggests that social justice, in educational terms, entails providing all students with resources necessary to learn to their full potential. These resources include material support such as books, curriculum and financial support and emotional resources, such as belief in all students’ ability and worth.

However, Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2004:184) have a view that there are still exceptions to the rule of academic failure as a result of lack of access to resources. From the study they conducted in America, they found that two boys from impoverished backgrounds were able to perform exceptionally well despite the challenges they faced. The concluding statement from these authors is that learners cannot perform well if they do not have emotional support and material support. The study confirmed the aforementioned statement that material resources do affect the quality and equality of education for all.

5.2.1.3 Parental support

The responses from teachers showed that Basotho parents are not committed to participating in their children’s education. This was expressed by respondents who maintained that it is not a common practice for Basotho parents to support their children. Responses showed that this demotivates both teachers and learners. The Basotho students indicated that they would
appreciate their parents supporting them as, at times, when they are given assignments there is no-one to assist them. They observed that this is not the case with the foreign learners. The teachers indicated that for some students it is not possible for them to get such support as they are double orphans. However, they maintained that even the guardians do not take part in the children’s education. The importance of parental involvement in the children’s education were endorsed by most teachers who reported that when parents are involved they are able to track the progress of their children and hence they are able to share problems and come up with solutions in collaboration.

In contrast to research findings that parents of minority students are not willing to take part in their children’s education (Foflonker 2010:94), this study found that the majority of the students are the ones whose parents are not taking part in their children’s education. This is attributed to the low educational levels of the Basotho parents, who take education to be the sole responsibility of the schools and not themselves.

5.2.2 Intercultural experiences that enhance or inhibit unfair discrimination

Even though most of the respondents were of the view that there was no discrimination in school, there were some who maintained that there were some incidences of discrimination. In fact, what most of the Basotho considered being discrimination was not substantiated. Hence the researcher concluded that some of the statements were driven by low self-esteem and lack of confidence Basotho learners felt they were experiencing discrimination in that they are being referred by teachers to the foreign learners for assistance when they do not understand. Yet what the researcher observed with regard to this particular issue was a different case altogether.

The researcher deduced that most Basotho learners, and even teachers, considered name calling as a ‘normal’ practice and so, to them, there was nothing bad about it. The foreign learners and teachers expressed the view that there are still incidences of discrimination which are manifested by name calling, like Mokoerekoere. This was confirmed by the fact that they end up not socializing with the Basotho. The hidden curriculum aspect is affected greatly by this dynamic. The researcher heard one Mosotho student using that name, which confirmed the claim by the foreigners.
It was disturbing to find that even the teachers use such words during their conversations and without really thinking or even feeling that they are hurting someone’s emotions. This is in contrast with the schools policy of respect and tolerance towards each other. Research has shown the negative impacts of bullying at school and how these can affect self-esteem and confidence of the victims (Pretorius 2000:10, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings 2004:184, Foflonker 2010:76).

In the above matter, this study does not confirm what previous research would predict. Even though the foreigners have shown that there are incidents of discrimination, there was no clear link between those incidences and their academic failure or success. In fact, the foreign learners seem to be outperforming the Basotho, regardless of such incidences. The researcher concluded that such acts of discrimination alone cannot affect the performance of the students but rather a combination of other factors, such as those mentioned in the previous section, play a role in the academic success of learners.

5.2.3 Intercultural experiences that enhance or inhibit respect for humanity

It was evident from the respondents’ views that they see respect for humanity as that which is inherent in us by virtue of being human beings. There was a general consensus that if discrimination exists at school, as was highlighted by the foreign learners and teachers; it is evident that there is no respect for humanity.

Even though the school advocates for respect and tolerance for others, the issue of name calling was stressed as that which really does not sit well with most of the foreigners. Most of Basotho respondents were not even aware that it was hurting those being called with such bad names. However, it was clear that name calling of foreign learners was not done by most of Basotho, although it cannot be refuted that there were such incidences.

There were contradicting views with regard to the issue of the use of mother-tongue by Basotho. Some foreigners were of the view that this makes it difficult for them to socialize with Basotho, but most Basotho were adamant that the use of different languages do promote respect for humanity. In this respect they argued that speaking Sesotho is part of their being Basotho. Nieto (2010:114) suggests that bilingualism and multilingualism exists in most countries yet it in some countries it is considered as a sign of low status. This is even worse in contexts where the
English language is used as those who speak languages other than English are considered as inferior.

The researcher is of the opinion that the school needs to put a policy in place which will allow each student to use their mother tongue as a way of fostering mother tongue use and of course allowing them to also learn the other languages. This will in turn promote appreciation of the diverse languages that the school has and, in that way, harmony will be achieved. However, there is also a view that the use of English as an official and international language could also promote respect for humanity, as all of the stakeholders can communicate well without any hindrances. Learners need to be encouraged to take into consideration others’ language needs to allow smooth relations amongst them, as it was evident that language is the main inhibiting factor of respect or, rather, that seems to be perpetuating the incidences that inhibit respect for humanity.

5.2.4 Intercultural experiences enhance or inhibit tolerance towards each other

The respondents were of the view that tolerance towards each other is enhanced by a respect for each other culture being promoted at school but, there were those who were of the view that there are instances where tolerance is inhibited. Some of the activities that were mentioned to be enhancing tolerance were group work activities, classroom discussions and debate exercises. These activities seemed to be enhancing tolerance towards each other as the respondents suggested that they have to learn to work together towards achievement of the task at hand. These activities enhance amongst others the following skills; being able to listen to each other, respecting each other’s view and opinions and helping each other where they do not understand. This is further enhanced by the teachers giving each of the student’s responsibilities so that all of them are held accountable to each other and towards the attainment of the task. The issue of language also emerged as one seen to be intensifying the inability to tolerate others.

Most respondents were also of the view that involvement in differing sporting codes plays a major role in boosting tolerance towards one another. The issue of team work and team building was identified as the key attributes that involvement in sports brings to relations amongst learners. It was acknowledged that, within the teams, tolerance towards each other is enhanced. Breaking intercultural boundaries goes beyond the classroom walls, as Foflonker (2010:50)
suggests in the claim that the influence of sporting activities is very powerful in dealing with the negative aspects in the schooling system.

Most teacher respondents were also of the view that negative self-esteem plays a role in the way learners tolerate each other. One teacher stressed that, at times, it is not about the incidences that happen in class but rather the interpretation of those incidences by the learners which can be manifested by their negative self-esteem. It was mentioned therefore that teachers need to ensure that they show appreciation to all the learners so that their esteem and confidence are boosted. There was a mention of the fact that all the activities that were mentioned, like group activities, can only serve the purpose of promoting tolerance towards each other if the teachers are monitoring such activities.

5.3. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE OPTIMAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

The conclusions deduced were based on the responses the researcher obtained from the teachers and learners. The conclusions drawn from the responses are discussed in this section, organized according to both learner and teacher responses to the themes addressed during the study.

5.3.1. Classroom environment

5.3.1.1 Repetition of lessons

Even though, initially, the idea of repeating lessons was mentioned by Basotho learners because of the issue of medium of instruction being a hindrance in their learning, it became clear that all of the learners see the benefit of lessons being repeated. Arkoudis (2006:12), in her study of teaching international students in Australian Universities, asserts that it is important for teachers to repeat lessons and to summarise discussions from time to time, highlighting the key points so that learners can follow. The participants suggested that, even if one did not understand the lesson in the first instance, during the repetition learning will be enhanced. It was noted though that, in order for the exercise to be effective, teachers should devote themselves to ensuring that they practice speaking slowly and even pausing between sentences so that the message is really understood by all learners.
5.3.1.2. Creating a safe learning environment

Most respondents were of the view that a positive and conducive learning environment is the foundation for effective learning. They suggested that such an environment triggers eagerness and interest to learn from the learners. It was noted responsibility for the creation of a safe learning environment rested upon all stakeholders, inclusive of the learners. Nieto (2010:163) is of the view that student’s voices are often not heard in the debates about school failure and success. She suggests that is why most policies would fail. The respondents agreed that such a safe learning environment can eradicate negative events that can arise in the interaction of people from different cultures (Foflonker 2010:110), such as the stereotypes that exist.

A general feeling that was evident from responses was that the kind of environment that is considered desirable is the one that can enhance tolerance towards each other, respecting other’s views and valuing other people, regardless of their identity. The teachers highlighted the fact that a safe learning environment calls for creativity from each teacher. One example was mentioned was making use of icebreakers, as this helps in the establishment of a bond amongst participants (Arkoudis 2006:10.)

5.3.1.3 Motivating and appreciating learners

Learners mentioned that being treated fairly by teachers can boost their morale and interest in learning. They stressed the fact that fair treatment should go beyond just appreciation to learners feeling they are loved and to the teachers really working within the boundaries of the “ethic of care” (Nieto 2010:96). The researcher is of the view that loving the learners does not necessarily mean giving students hugs and helping with material needs but rather includes having high expectations and making sure that their expectations are known to the learners. It is not only for the teachers to know what expectations they have of the learners but those expectations should be communicated to the learners because that can propel them to do well.

It is important to take cognizance of the fact that the learners interest to learn and their success or failure is not based merely on their socio-economic backgrounds but is greatly affected by the school-based relationships and organizational structures (Nieto 2010:97). The research concluded therefore that, even if the school could have the best facilities with the most qualified teachers, if the learners are not motivated to learn there will never be success in such a school.
Motivated learners do not need a push but rather find it in their selves to learn and achieve to the best of their potential. Motivation is therefore talked of as oil that rejuvenates the machine (Senge 1995) in Bertram, Ndhlovu and Gultig (2006:32).

5.3.1.4 Monitoring classroom dynamics

Teachers expressed the view that the monitoring of classroom dynamics is vital as a way of enhancing learning. This is due to the fact that there are non-academic experiences that happen in class and which may affect the learning process. There was a feeling that during activities like group discussions, if teachers do not take it upon themselves to ensure that there is constant monitoring, learning is likely to suffer because certain learners tend to over shadow others in their group, probably due to differences in personalities and intelligence abilities.

The researcher is of the view that classroom dynamics can either be a source of enrichment for learning or a barrier to learning. The researcher therefore suggests that teachers should organize activities in such a way that diversity of experiences is harnessed towards the betterment of learning and teaching. This can be achieved through assigning a task to each member of the group and holding each member accountable in the fulfilment of the task assigned to them (Arkoudis 2006:10). The research concluded that proper monitoring of classroom dynamics is not only a strategy that can be used to enhance learning, but also a contributor to a safe learning environment which promotes principle of respect and tolerance towards one another.

5.3.2 School Environment

5.3.2.1 Creating social and reading clubs

There was a general view from teachers interviewed that social and reading clubs can enhance learning. This was based on the rationale that interpersonal relations are central to learning (Nieto 2010:96). Without good relations, the opportunity exists that learning will be affected, even if the school were to try and provide infrastructural enhancement. The researcher believes that the school is one of the most important socializing agents in society and it is through school clubs that the learner’s social skills can be enhanced.

Due to the fact that most of the problems that were identified during the research were claimed to be related to language, there was a belief that it is through the reading clubs that language
difficulties can be dealt with. These clubs will further boost the learner’s interest in reading, which translates into interest in learning which, in turn, results in academic success. The reading clubs will also enhance the learner’s critical thinking skills as they will also participate in debates amongst themselves and even go as far as entering competitions.

It is very important to devise the rules for social and reading clubs as, if they are not monitored, they can be dysfunctional and even produce unanticipated results. The researcher suggests this in the light of the fact that it was clear from that the teachers had contradicting views as to how the clubs will be managed.

5.3.2.2 Training on cultural diversity, including communication

The teachers expressed their concern in as far their need for training on cultural diversity is concerned. Even though the teachers are professionally trained and qualified, there was a concern from them that their training did not give them skills in dealing with diverse classes. This lack is based on the traditional notion that Lesotho is culturally homogeneous.

The researcher is of the view that that traditional notion of cultural homogeneity is no longer valid and that there is therefore a need for a mind shift which can start with the trainings that teachers go through. Without the teacher’s appreciation of diversity in classrooms, as is presently the case, teachers are going to be ineffective in their teaching and, in consequence, learners are going to be challenged in their learning. Making an assumption that learners are equals irrespective of the disadvantages of either social class or academic achievement (Foflonker 2010:111) does not mean that they have been treated fairly. Hence it is vital for teachers to be fully equipped to deal with cultural diversity in the classroom.

Communication needs to be effective if teaching and learning are to be enhanced. Teachers need to be trained to be able to communicate with learners from different backgrounds. Training of teachers to communicate in diverse classrooms means they will be able to take cognizance of the diversity in their classrooms, without necessarily prejudicing against any particular culture (Min Jeong 2008:31).
5.3.2.3. Acknowledging, valuing and celebrating cultural differences

The respondents expressed the view that it is important for the school to acknowledge, value and celebrate the cultural differences that exist in the school. The teachers mentioned that most of the problems that affect the learning environment emanate from the fact that the school, though multicultural, tends to act as if not so.

There was a general suggestion that since the school already had a cultural day where the norm has been to celebrate Sesotho culture; it will be of benefit to the school that in future during such a day all the different cultures are celebrated. This will improve the tolerance for others and the learners will, in turn, appreciate the fact that no culture is inferior but rather we are all the same but different.

The issue of name-calling was mentioned as a problem at the school, and the teachers suggested that the challenge can be dealt with through celebrating cultural differences. In fact, it is critical that teachers use the learner’s names when calling them as this also encourages participation from all the learners (Arkoudis 2006:11). The researcher is of the view that acknowledging and celebrating the different cultures will set a good precedent for creating a safe classroom environment as it establishes good relations around the school and a good rapport is established from the onset.

5.3.2.4 Declaring English as an elective subject

Even though English language is declared as one of the official languages in Lesotho (The Constitution of Lesotho 1993, Chapter 1, sub section 3(1)), it became clear during the study that, as one of the passing subjects, English is negatively impacting on the learners’ academic achievement. There was a general view from the respondents that English being regarded as one of the subjects’ one has to pass so as to proceed to the next grade as really an outdated policy.

Language is the central medium through which education happens and it was evident that the use of English as the language of instruction is affecting the learner’s academic performance greatly. The researcher could deduce from the learners that English affects their performance greatly and in turn affects their future plans as they cannot pass any class without passing English. The researcher is in agreement with the teachers lack of achievement by Basotho learners does not
necessarily mean that the Basotho students are not intelligent enough but rather that they are greatly affected by the use of English, which is not their mother tongue.

Notwithstanding the widespread perspective that English is an international language (Nieto 2010:113), which was probably one of the reasons that it was declared an official language, it is vital that the linguistic diversity of schools is appreciated and so as to understand how not using Sesotho is impacting on Basotho learners’ academic achievement. The researcher is of the view that it is urgent that the country reconsider the policy of the medium of instruction and also reconsider the policy that upholds English being regarded as one of the subjects one has to pass to move to the next class, irrespective of their academic interests.

5.3.2.5 Unlimited access to internet and library

There was a mention by respondents of the fact that availability and accessibility to resources affect the learning. The respondents were of the view that the school should allow them unlimited access to the library and internet. Some of the Basotho learners are unable to do homework exercises where research is needed as they do not have internet at homes. There were a number of reasons that were put forward with regard to the unavailability of internet at homes; unavailability of electricity being one of them. It is therefore important that those learners who might feel they want to study after school hours are afforded such an opportunity by the school.

In respect of the provision of internet and library facilities, there was a discussion with regard to whose responsibility it will be that security of the equipment in the library is maintained. Some of the answers suggested that the learners themselves will take responsibility of the equipment and this will instil in them the sense of accountability. It was however, evident from some responses that it was not safe to leave the security of the equipment in the hands of learners. As a solution it was suggested that the school should get a security guard who can guard against any vandalism of school equipment.

5.3.3 Home environment

This section discusses the conclusions made with regard to strategies that are mostly influenced by the home environment.
5.3.3.1 Parental involvement and support

It was evident from the responses that parental involvement and support is important, yet most Basotho parents have not taken it as one of their duties to take part in their children’s education. Research (Foflonker 2010:112, Nieto 2010:96) has suggested that parents of minority groups in schools do not take part in their children’s education however this study suggests otherwise. Basotho are the majority in the school yet their parents are the ones who do not show interest in the education of the children. In contrast, parents of the minority learners make constant interactions with teachers and assist their children with their homework exercises.

It is therefore up to teachers to design advocacy strategies that will sensitize the Basotho parents and show them the need to take part in their children’s education. Child headed households were identified as a challenge in this respect and it was agreed that the guardians need to be assured that their involvement in the children’s education is not about financial assistance but rather emotional support.

The researcher is of the view that the home is the first socialization agent that the child finds him/herself in (Pretorius 2000:78). If it does not support their education it is very difficult for children to perform well. Hence it is imperative that teachers make sure that parents understand the importance of their being involved in the education of their children.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were unexpected challenges during data collection which resulted in some limitations. The initial plan was to conduct the study in a number of schools but due to complications at other schools with regard to data collection, the researcher resorted to scaling down to one school. However, despite having scaled down to one school, there were other challenges, for example observations had to be done during revision time of examination period which proved very difficult.

Moreover, because of the researcher being a local, she noticed that the foreign (teachers and learners) were a bit reluctant to provide information to her. The researcher was fortunate though as she knew one of the foreign teachers which eased the other foreigners after some time. The
characteristics of the school which include socio economic status might have limited the research findings. The school where the study was carried out, is generally speaking low socio economic status which might have also influenced the data. Lastly, the researchers’ own experiences of intercultural differences might have also influenced data.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research add value to the intercultural education approach. The findings can be used by the Ministry of Education as policy makers and the schools as the entities delivering education. Nieto (2010:162) is of the opinion that reforming school structures alone will not lead to substantive differences in student achievement, particularly if such changes are not also accompanied by profound changes in how educators think about their students. The researcher therefore makes the following recommendations to the Ministry of Education and to the Lesotho schools in general.

5.5.1 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education

As the custodian of education in Lesotho, the study would not have been of value if no recommendations could be made to the Ministry. This is no policy can be made without the consent of the ministry; hence the study would not be of any good.

5.5.1.1 Reviewing the medium of instruction policy

The researcher recommends that the Ministry of Education should review their policy with regard to the medium of instruction. This study concluded that the fact that English is regarded as one of the subjects that one has to pass in order to go to the next class really hampers the learning of the children. The researcher agrees with the respondents that English is an international language and our learners need to learn it for that reason but it should not determine their futures, as is currently the case. The review should be done with the purpose of promoting mother tongue use, which research has suggested is important for the children’s academic performance.
5.5.1.2 incorporating intercultural education in the curriculum

The study has concluded against the belief that that Lesotho’s schools are monocultural. Hence the Ministry of Education is not doing justice to Lesotho’s learners. Learners and teachers need to be culturally sensitive and be able to thrive in the multicultural society they are now living in. If the principles of intercultural education are not included in the curriculum, schools in Lesotho are not keeping pace with developments in the country and the world at large.

5.5.1.3 Training teachers on cultural diversity and communication

The researcher recommends that the teachers be trained to deal with diverse classrooms and this includes intercultural communication. This recommendation is based on the responses that the researcher obtained during the study, indicating that teachers are not skilled in dealing with diversity in classrooms. This affects the way they teach and, in turn, affects the learner’s performance. For the already qualified teachers, trainings can be offered in the form of workshops to capacitate them in dealing with the diverse classroom situations.

5.5.2 Recommendations to the schools

Schools need to be progressive and this is only possible if they keep pace with the changing times. The recommendations to be discussed will assist schools in ensuring that they incorporate intercultural aspect in their day to day activities.

5.5.2.1 Celebrating cultural differences

The study concluded that there is a strong link between culture and learning and to deal with the problems raised, it is imperative that schools value and celebrate the cultural differences in schools. This can be done through a variety of activities like including all cultures during cultural days. This in turn will promote tolerance towards each other, respect for other human beings and positive socialization skills will be enhanced. It is through this recommendation that harmony will be achieved in schools and ensures that no culture will treated as inferior. Also it would be in the best interest of the school to be creative in celebrating the different cultures. A strategy that would support this would be to talk about different cultures during assembly before Morning
Prayer. The school might also have posters all over the school with messages that show the appreciation of the different cultures in schools.

5.5.2.2 Promoting sporting activities

It was evident from the study that sports can play a major role in the promotion of tolerance towards each other as it also promotes team work. Involving all learners in the different sports can help in dealing with some of the barriers that were mentioned to be inhibiting learning. Moreover, the promotion of sporting activities will also enhance the learner’s socialization skills, which are vital for better relationships amongst learners and with the teachers.

5.5.2.3 More advocacy on parental involvement

Parental involvement in learners’ education is a crucial component of the education system. It was mentioned by most respondents that Basotho parents are not actively involved in their children’s education. The researcher therefore believes that the school needs to be proactive about the issue. More advocacy campaigns are needed for parents to understand how their not being involved in the education of their children inhibits their academic achievement.

5.5.2.4 Allowing use of mother tongue

The study concluded that the choice of language of instruction can be one of the major barriers to learning. It also affects the interpersonal relationships amongst the learners. It would be in the best interest of the learners to be allowed to use mother tongue as it has been shown, throughout the study, that despite the belief to the contrary, bilingualism is not really a problem and that rather it enhances learners’ cognitive ability.

The researcher recommends that the school allow learners to use their mother tongues so that they are able to communicate and express themselves freely. This is because it was evident that the idea of punishing learners for not speaking English does not really enhance their English proficiency. On this issue, Min Jeong (2008:120) asserts that language learning should be fun and applicable to life otherwise it may become difficult and tedious and, in the process, it becomes senseless.
5.5.3 Recommendations for future research

The researcher believes that this study could be used as a basis for further research. Firstly, since the study was done at a public school, it would be interesting to find out what the results would be if done at a private school, where the situation is different. Secondly, the study can be used in the Southern part of Lesotho where the researcher has learnt that Xhosa and Sephuthi are some of the languages used as opposed to Sesotho. Moreover, a follow-up doctoral study can be done where a model can be developed to facilitate optimal teaching and learning in a multicultural teaching and learning environment. Lastly, this study could be used as a basis for a comparative study where socio-economic factors and levels of cultural diversity could be used as factors of comparison in order for further strategies for effective teaching to be developed.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The study has investigated the link between intercultural differences and optimal teaching and learning environment in a school in Maseru. The study was conducted at Maseru High School, a government school within the capital city. The main problem that the study was investigating is that teachers and learners from different cultures do not always experience each other positively due to their cultural differences and this could inhibit optimal learning.

The study confirmed that there are problems that occur when teachers and learners from different cultures meet in a school environment. The study concluded that deficits in tolerance towards each other, respect for humanity, educational equality and equity, along with the existence of unfair discrimination are evident in the multicultural classrooms studied. There were a number of factors that were found to be attributed to the above-mentioned factors being inhibited in the said school.

The recommendations included in this report were made in line with the challenges that were highlighted throughout the study. The recommendations suggest that dealing with intercultural differences is not a simple matter and that it therefore it for collaboration from all stakeholders
for the betterment of the teaching and learning in schools. It calls for an integrated approach which will make sure that everyone involved in the education of children is taken on board.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

DATA COLLECTION TOOL FOR SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The same questions will be used for both teachers and learners

Are there any intercultural experiences that inhibit or enhance;

- Educational equality and quality for all
- Unfair discrimination
- Respect of humanity
- Tolerance towards one another

Mention any factors in the multicultural classroom that in your opinion inhibit/enhance optimal teaching and learning.

What strategies do you think can be used to enhance optimal teaching and learning?
APPENDIX 2

FOR OBSERVATION THE FOLLOWING WILL BE LOOKED AT:

Interaction between learners of different cultures that is, the way they socialise (their interpersonal relationships)

The formation of social groups on the playground

Communication between learners of different cultures

Any signs of maltreatment/ noticeable signs of discrimination
Focus group discussion will be conducted if after an interview and observation the researcher feels the data gathered does not answer the research questions convincingly.