Confronting the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century in uMkhanyakude district by school leaders

By

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore school principals' experiences in confronting the challenges of multicultural classrooms in 21st-century rural primary schools in the uMkhanyakude District and to identify responses that could improve teaching and learning. It examined how principals understood and responded to diversity, language, equity and the implementation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in the participating schools. The literature review considered multicultural education, culturally responsive leadership, school governance and school-family-community relationships, with particular attention to the constraints affecting historically disadvantaged rural schools. The study was informed by Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory and CRP, especially the pillars of academic success, cultural competence and critical consciousness. An interpretivist qualitative case-study design was used. Data were generated through semi-structured individual interviews with five primary school principals and analysis of relevant institutional documents. Documentary records included descriptive academic achievement and discipline indicators that were used for qualitative corroboration rather than as a separate quantitative research design. Interview and documentary data were analysed through coding, categorisation and thematic/content analysis, with triangulation used to strengthen credibility. The findings indicated that principals confronted shortages of dedicated funding and specialised technical support, linguistic diversity, unequal learner needs and difficulties in implementing culturally responsive and translanguaging practices. Principals responded through collaborative leadership, internal professional development, local partnerships, stakeholder engagement and restorative approaches to cultural conflict. In this study, a multicultural classroom refers to a learning environment characterised by culturally, linguistically and socially diverse learners, while multicultural leadership refers to school leadership practices that promote inclusion, cultural responsiveness, stakeholder participation and equitable access to learning resources. The study recommended strengthened professional development, targeted district support, more responsive resource allocation and closer collaboration among principals, educators, parents, School Governing Bodies and communities to support the implementation of CRP.

Keywords:

School principals; Multicultural classrooms; Culturally Relevant Pedagogy; Rural education; uMkhanyakude district; Educational leadership; Translanguaging; School governance.

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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CRP	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
CRSL	Culturally Responsive School Leadership
DoE	Department of Education
HODs	Head of Departments
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender
LRC	Learner Representative Council
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
PD	Professional Development
SAHRC	African Human Rights Commission
SAPS	South African Police Services
SGB	School Governing Body
SIC	School Improvement Committee
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMTs	School Management Teams

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

With changing cultural demographics in student populations, various cultural perspectives need to be incorporated into formal education. This study examines multicultural education in the uMkhanyakude district of South Africa where high levels of both international and internal migration have been documented. As a result, various cultural and linguistic groups are represented in the school-going population (Alismail, 2016). Thus, teachers are expected to consider the diverse cultural backgrounds of learners when devising appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Culturalism and diversity, as depicted in the various communities of South Africa, are important for the completion of the country's development goals (UNESCO, 2023). Moreover, as documented in the Global Framework on Transferable Skills (2022), rapid social and cultural changes such as multiculturalism and diversity foster the learning of social and emotional skills essential for engaging and interacting with society and the world at large.

As stipulated in the Glossary of Educational Reform (2020), incorporating various cultures and multicultural perspectives in teaching and learning ensures that students deepen their knowledge of the many ways of being and interacting with the world. It is important for teachers to instruct students to embrace cultural diversity and adapt to world changes. (Drexel University School of Education, 2023). The UNICEF Global Framework (2022) mentions the importance of developing emotional and social skills due to the existence of various cultures in the same classroom. These skills help students interact and communicate with fellow citizens and other people in the community.

Potokri (2018) notes that for one to understand others, one must begin with understanding oneself. Understanding others in a multicultural setting is very essential. Banks (2004) adds that teaching in a multicultural setting helps teachers to develop the ability to teach and work with students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds including the disadvantaged. To achieve this, there is need for principals to be multicultural in their leadership style (Khalifa et al, 2016) beyond conventional

administrative and managerial leadership. This is to promote a school environment where teachers are motivated to interact with parents/guardians and the community and adapt to the required teaching and learning for the 21st century. This research explored how principals of primary schools in the uMkhanyakude district respond and interact with the demands of a multicultural classroom.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Multicultural education focuses on background, feedback and resources. In South Africa, the curriculum concentrates on the groups of Afrikaners and Zulus, with a notable lack on other groups such as Indians, European and other ethnicities. Resources targeted at these groups do not exist, resulting in lack of representation and complete marginalization, particularly on the groups such as Swati, Sotho and Venda.

Diverse students may feel that school is an alienating and unwelcoming environment. This feeling can develop into an attitude that they are unimportant and unvalued. It is difficult to feel motivated, interested and concerned about education when large portions of it do not speak to you, particularly when it does not address challenges faced by you and your community.

Various cultural assumptions can shape interactions within the classroom and affect how participants perceive their importance and value in the education system. Teachers should incorporate strategies that promote learners' expression and appreciation of various cultural values. Reflection, in the form of engaging critically with peers, can help participants identify cultural biases that informed their interaction within the classroom and their perception of participation. It is important to take multiple approaches when dealing with a culturally diverse student body.

There are discussions concerning practices, school materials, and school policies which should be examined. The best we can do with scarce resources is to deal with gross inequalities and inequities. It means that in dealing with education and training, we should try as much as possible to consider the needs as opposed to the wants. In so doing, there will be no one who will be left out.

There is a huge gap between the democratic ideals of the post-apartheid legislative framework, for instance, the Constitution (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996), the

South African Schools Act (1996), and language in education policies, and the practices which occur in rural schools. Although the policies at the national level are to promote inclusive and non-discriminatory education, and to develop and promote multilingual and diverse education, the conditions which occur in the schools in uMkhanyakude district and elsewhere in rural South Africa, demonstrate the lack of integration of different languages, cultures and education. In absence of enough education and training materials which are appropriate to a given culture, rural and remote schools' principal teachers are faced with the reality of the dominance of certain languages (mostly English and other regional languages) at the expense of others (indigenous, first and/or rural languages), thereby promoting mono-culturalism and assimilationism. Consequently, rural schools are faced with challenges of multicultural education, and the gap between policy and realization becomes evident.

Decentralized school governance in South Africa places additional work and stress on school principals and school governing bodies (SGBs) at the expense of their other responsibilities. The Schools Act (SASA, 1996) states that SGBs can establish the language policy of the school, create the code of conduct, and determine religious practices of the school. Rural SGBs are typically composed of people from various social and cultural backgrounds including people with low or no formal education. It is the responsibility of the principal to support and guide the SGB to make decisions that will not negatively impact student groups that may already be vulnerable and/or marginalized. Due to the varying social and economic conditions of families, principals have to be transformative leaders to bring about change in order to forge positive relationships between members of the school community and the school, especially families that are hard to reach (Epstein, 2018).

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Multicultural education is considered crucial in inclusive quality education. Several studies have focused on multicultural education (Athiemoolam & Vermaak, 2021; Sachkova et al., 2021). However, not many studies have examined the roles of various educational stakeholders, and especially school leaders, in responding to challenges of multicultural education and how different cultures influence education. Also, no study has focused on the challenges of multicultural education. The transformation of educators and other stakeholders to become change agents in their field may contribute in achieving the goal of providing mass education and responding to the

challenges of equity and inequality in education (Cappy, 2016). Understanding various cultures is very important in a multicultural and diverse environment. Therefore, the focus of this study is to contribute to existing literature by demonstrating how rural school principals respond to challenges of multicultural education.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The presence of cultural and linguistic diversity within a rural primary school classroom creates a leadership challenge. This is due to factors such as inadequate classroom space and resources, and an incapacitated teacher education. One of the challenges alluded to by Sachkova et al. (2021) that require context specific responses, is the existence of various socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic variations. Teachers in multicultural classrooms in South Africa have been observed to be proactive in responding to the different learning needs of their students. However, responding to the needs of the students in each classroom is contingent on the presence of leadership and other facilitative resources at the school level. It thus appears that diversity per se should not be considered a challenge. More responsive leadership, in combination with adequate materials and technical support, would enable school staff to implement changes necessary to fulfill the goals of equitability and inclusion.

Leaders of primary schools in the uMkhanyakude district, have to address the needs of a diverse school community in the absence of required leadership, materials and support. Many of these leaders are confronted by simultaneously operating conditions of illiteracy and poverty, multi-grade class sizes and teaching, and lack of appropriate materials for instruction and support. Teachers in these conditions are required to teach using the medium of their second, third, or fourth language. South African educational leadership contains an outstanding case of contradiction. South African policy since 1996 has promoted schooling that is inclusive, not discriminatory, and takes into consideration the cultures of various communities (RSA, 1996; SASA, 1996). Despite this, principals working in rural areas of the country are typically first-time principals who have little or no formal training in multicultural and/or cross-border leadership, and no experience in dealing with education across diverse communities using translanguaging. Therefore, rural principals are faced with the unenviable

challenge of trying to resolve linguistic and cultural issues through their own initiative and with little or no experience and/or training.

Additionally, research that focuses on other aspects of South African education, including the training of principals to work in rural areas of the country, is equally deficient. Of all the research that has been conducted on multicultural education in South Africa, very little addresses management of diversity in education at the school and district levels. Similarly, a lack of research exists on management of diversity in education at the school and district levels, particularly in the former Model C schools, suburban and metropolitan areas. Likewise, no research focuses on the challenges of principals working in the rural, resource-depleted uMkhanyakude district.

Empirical evidence suggests that existing leadership models and theories provide little value in explaining the day-to-day realities of rural school principals. This clearly illustrates the lack of scholarly work dedicated to analyzing the rural school principal's frame of reference and the challenges facing them. Until adequately researched scholarly papers are published, it is unlikely that the policies and staff training initiatives developed by the Department of Basic Education will adequately address the challenges faced by principals of rural primary schools. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an imperative to conduct empirical research to study the challenges faced by principals of primary schools situated in uMkhanyakude district, as it will assist the Department of Education, and other stakeholders to develop policies and initiate professional development programs for principals at the local level.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1 Main Research Question

The main research question was:

How do school principals in the uMkhanyakude District experience and respond to the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century?

1.5.2 Sub-Research Questions

The sub-research questions were:

1. What challenges do school principals experience in leading teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms?
2. What competencies and forms of support do school principals identify as necessary for teachers to respond effectively to multicultural classrooms?
3. How do school principals experience and facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders in supporting multicultural learners?
4. What strategies do school principals propose or implement to address the challenges of multicultural classrooms?

1.6 RESEARCH AIM

The study aimed to explore how school principals in the uMkhanyakude District experience and respond to the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century and to identify strategies that could strengthen inclusive teaching and learning.

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives were:

1. To explore the challenges school principals experience in leading teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms.
2. To examine the competencies and forms of support that principals identify as necessary for teachers to respond effectively to multicultural classrooms.
3. To analyse how principals experience and facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders in supporting multicultural learners.
4 To identify and evaluate strategies proposed or implemented by principals to address the challenges of multicultural classrooms.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section gives a preliminary literature review, and the more detailed and critical review of literature is found in Chapter 2. The preliminary review identifies some of the

key challenges in multicultural education, for example, ethnicity, parental support, learners' learning styles, religious influences, family influences and other cultural influences, language, and the level of preparedness of teachers. Chapter 2 reviews the literature in more depth and analyzes the information in relation to the research questions and the school principals' views on the challenges.

1.8.1 Challenges in Multicultural Classrooms and Implementations to Address the Challenges

There is a lot of confusion about what the term "multicultural education" means. As a result, its implementation remains inadequate. Diaz (1992) indicated that in school settings, members of the dominant society achieve better academic results, as they are familiar with the school's culture and academic standards. Children in school settings must learn the values of different cultures of the world. Only then, can children appreciate the fact that all people of the world have interdependence and common destiny. The most difficult responsibilities that teachers face, are how to promote the teaching-learning process in culturally diverse classrooms. Those teachers who can face these challenges in their teaching practice, deserve our support and reinforcement. Challenges of multicultural education are manifold. However, the potential positive aspects of this educational concept far outweigh the negatives. According to Grasso (2016), teaching literature of various cultures contributes toward building mutual respect, understanding, and peace in the world. Education for intercultural understanding provides opportunities for students to become familiar with the various cultures of the world beyond their own.

Desegregation opened more educational opportunities for people of color. For the first time, black students were able to look up to adults who were not white. Due to social segregation, many students of different ethnic backgrounds have little to no interaction with people of different cultures until they enter the workforce. Many K-12 students have not learned how to appropriately socialize with people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is not uncommon for students to enter the classroom with preconceived negative attitudes and feelings toward people of other ethnic backgrounds, including prejudices toward racial and cultural differences (Alsubaie & Ayesh, 2015). Alsubaie and Ayesh suggest that this sometimes results in behavioral

issues, refusal to comply, learning disabilities, withdrawal and other behavioral disorders, and learning difficulties. The educators' inability to recognize, understand, or address students' cultural differences often perpetuates these issues.

1.8.1.1 Ethnicity

Ethnicity is cited as a major obstacle in cross-cultural teaching. Ethnicity is held by many scholars, including Den Brok and Levy (2005) and Den Brok et al. (2002), to have a negative influence on the interaction and communication between teaching and learning in contexts where there are variations in ethnic groups. Differences in ethnicity may affect the level of interaction among learners and may also affect the teacher's role in the process. The studies reviewed by Den Brok and Levy (2005) focused on three areas. The first area focused on the analysis of the manner in which teachers handle themselves when interacting with ethnic minority students. The second area focused on the manner in which students evaluate their teachers' behaviors. The last area focused on how and why students' achievements in school are influenced by their ethnic backgrounds.

Lesley (2001) notes ethnicity makes a distinction to a culture or a community in various ways i.e. language, beliefs, ancestry, and nationality. It emphasizes the common experiences, values, and ideas. Cultural influences influence ethnic people's thoughts and ways of life. For the average person, ethnicity shapes ways of life. For example, being part of a certain ethnic group, gives one a sense of identity, and esteem. Having a common lineage influence in the same way people think and feel. Teachers should understand the role ethnicity plays in students' lives and devise ways to incorporate ethnicity in the teaching process to make lessons culturally sensitive. Having ethnically diverse teachers who can integrate ethnicity in teaching processes is one way of making classroom learning processes ethnically responsive. Inclusion of ethnic and cultural diversity can be addressed in a pedagogy in which teachers convey lessons that reflect many ways of life.

1.8.1.2 Racism and inequality

Racism entails people having certain beliefs about how people from certain groups behave because of the characteristics of those groups and dividing them through belief

in one's race being superior. On the other hand, Koh & Sin (2020) describe inequality as when resources and opportunities are not equally distributed among the members of a particular society. Inequality has also resulted in other issues socially, economically, and geographically. Thus, children need to learn from an early age to respect people for whom they really are. There are more studies showing that racism is a major issue in multiculturals classrooms.

1.8.2 Family and Parental Support

According to Avnet and others in 2019, what children learn and accomplish depends on many factors. It is noted that where parents are involved, it becomes significant and improves children's performance in school. This is to illustrate that teachers within the parent community, including the curriculum being taught, sometimes hinder children from succeeding. Hence, parents should be around their children when they are young. The reason behind this is that children may experience difficulties relating with other kids in school because they have not been trained to read social cues early in life, or the parents have not helped them in doing so. In this case, the role of parents becomes significant in helping young children succeed in school because they help them acquire the necessary skills to prepare.

1.8.3 Learners' Learning Style

According to Banks (2013), individuals posses differing experiences and preferences that influence learning. Students can identify the preferred methods of instruction and interests of their fellow students because of various cultural backgrounds. Teachers must take advantage of the differences to structure classroom activities. Students come to school to better their lives and the lives of their families. They also go to gain the appreciation and satisfaction of their parents and guardians. Some students are ambivalent about school because they are aware of their peers' educational and social advantages. This situation causes a loss of school interest and commitment among students. Teachers must ensure they create an atmosphere in the school where students are happy to attend and appreciate the importance of each school going child. This will minimize the incidences of children leaving school before completing their education. Teachers must be open to new ideas to appreciates various cultural

dimensions and transform their teaching to reflect the multicultural nature of their classroom.

1.8.4 Religion

Banks (2013) believes students enjoy learning different ways based on their individual abilities and interests. With various ethnic groups living in the same community, teachers have opportunities to explore different ways of engaging students in learning activities, based on their preferences. Teachers should work with students in identifying their strengths to help them increase their knowledge in key learning areas; this helps students achieve their personal goals and gives them the satisfaction and fulfilment that their parents and guardians desire of them. Comparing the opportunities and chances that their fellow students have made some students who enjoy privileges feel satisfied and excited to go to school while deflating the zeal of those students who feel school is the only means to life opportunity and catalyst. Teachers are advised to work on making students feel that learning is pleasant experience, important, and lifelong process, particularly the students at risk of dropping out of school. This is likely to assist the teacher in effectively implementing participative and relevant educational activities. It’s important to embrace different cultures to enhance understanding of different learning styles, appreciate individual differences, and embrace positive changes in learning. Teaching is also enhanced when teachers identify and incorporate positive learning activities that are beneficial and engaging to students in their classroom. This enhances teaching and promotes learning.

1.8.5 Family

In multi-cultural classes, teachers can experience challenges in engaging in dialogue with their pupils' parents. Even when the child is fluent in English language, their parent may not know the language; hence, teachers will not be assured that the parent is comprehending and participating in the learning process of the child. There are diverse expectations from parents for teachers in multi-cultural classes, mainly concerning the importance of education, particularly of girls. With the advancement in global connectedness and interdependence, people from different cultural backgrounds are increasingly interacting, resulting in more families consisting of different cultures (Tili & Barker, 2015). Some researchers, including Kontogianni and Oikonomidis (2022), have indicated that when parents provide emotional support, it facilitates successful

completion of class assignments and dealing with daily challenges by the students. Even though engagement of families is important in a multi-cultural class, numerous challenges are associated with family engagement in such classes. According to Foulidi et al. (2022), families encounter challenges in playing their part in multi-cultural classrooms. These challenges include lack of time, poor-paid employment in harsh circumstances, lack of comprehension of educational system, illiteracy among parents, and negative personal experiences with education.

1.8.6 Cultural Behaviours

Each culture uses distinct forms of rhetoric for conveying their messages. Americans have been traditionally taught to be straightforward in their speech in the academic environment. In other words, it is necessary to present one's thoughts in a clear manner by using examples, refuting any counterarguments, and finishing with an effective conclusion. Members of other cultures could have been taught not to quarrel, to be modest, and to use a roundabout speech pattern. Some students might have problems in creating a persuasive essay in the American way and participating in the classroom discussion since these approaches are not familiar to them (Mitchell, 2023).

1.8.7 Language Barriers

Mitchell (2023) points out that it is crucial for the teachers and students to interact effectively to facilitate teaching process, however, it becomes complicated when the learners do not have a sufficient linguistic competence for communicating. In a classroom where there are learners who belong to various cultures, they may fail to comprehend everything the instructor says and may lack appropriate vocabulary for asking more detailed questions. Some of the learners may become so shy to participate in the learning process so that teachers cannot assess their knowledge level or encourage them to ask for assistance. It becomes problematic for teachers to assess learners' comprehension level and encourage them to seek assistance when required.

1.8.8 Teacher Preparedness

It is imperative for teachers who work in classes where students come from diverse cultures to be prepared to deal with any conflict or confusion that may arise from

differences in beliefs, values, and behaviors among the students. Cultural beliefs are acquired through experience and are not formally taught. One does not understand the cultural rules until he or she breaks them. The teacher may end up breaking some cultural rules, which may make the students uncomfortable and result in difficult situations for them (Mitchell, 2023).

1.9 DELIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

The delimitations set the purposeful boundaries and scope of a research study, specifying the areas that are to be covered and making clear what areas are not part of the focus of the investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The setting of such boundaries is critical in terms of clarity of concept and methodology and relevance of context. This part explains the scope of the study along three separate dimensions.

1.9.1 Geographical Scope and Site Selection Rationale

Geographically this study will be restricted to uMkhanyakude District Municipality located in the north-east region of KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. This Municipality is predominantly rural, historically underdeveloped and has high levels of poverty and unemployment. It also has underdeveloped infrastructure.

Being a rural municipality bordering Eswatini and Mozambique, with a variety of different ethnic groups and languages gives this area a potential educational research site. Here teachers work with learners from various languages such as isiZulu, Xitsonga, Siswati and Portuguese. As a result, teachers need to integrate various languages in their classrooms to promote learning. Schools in this district are located in rural areas and mostly rely on the government for support and are classified as Quintiles 1-3, that is, no-fee schools. Thus, there is a good opportunity to examine the challenges and opportunities of education in resource constrained situations and particularly, the role of multicultural leadership. Literature focused on educational leadership in South Africa is abundant, and most of the published literature is focused on the urban, former Model C schools. UMkhanyakude is a rural border district of South Africa and is under-researched.

1.9.2 Target population and participant boundary

The target population and boundaries of participation for this study will be defined by those of primary school principals employed in public rural primary schools within specific circuits in the uMkhanyakude district.

Only heads of public primary schools (Grades R–7) would qualify as participants, while secondary school principals, private school heads, and townships school heads were excluded from participation. Primary schools were used as sample because they are stages at which language learning, socialization, and school governance are essential processes that directly involve the multicultural imperative.

It should be noted that the study concentrated on school principals as the core of analysis. Classroom teachers, subject heads, and circuit managers have much to offer from an operational standpoint, but principals possess the necessary managerial expertise, authority, and influence to manage diversity and allocate finances as well as oversee the implementation of policies. The selected participants had at least three years of administrative experience in rural primary schools of the uMkhanyakude district.

1.9.3 Explicit exclusions from the research

The following elements were explicitly excluded from the scope of this research:

High schools operate under different subject-specialist structures, adolescent learner dynamics, and language-of-instruction frameworks that differ significantly from primary school environments.

Former Model C and urban private schools possess distinct financial resources, teacher demographics, and socio-economic profiles that do not reflect the systemic realities of rural primary schooling and are therefore excluded.

This study does not aim to measure statistical correlations or generalize findings across the entirety of South Africa. Rather, as a qualitative case study, its goal is to provide rich, context-bound, and transferable insights into rural primary school leadership within the uMkhanyakude district.

1.10 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

1.10.1 Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory

This study used Epstein et al.'s (2019) model called the overlapping spheres, which focuses on how schools, families, and communities work together. It also used a framework with six types of interactions to show that these three groups can be seen as an organized system that supports children's learning and growth. The model recognizes that families, schools, and communities are the most important influences

on a child's development. However, family and school receive greater emphasis. This perspective worked well for this study because it highlights how teachers and parents interact in schools. This also follows the rules stated in the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996. Using this model, school managers can work with parents to better understand the community they are part of, the kinds of parents they regularly interact with, and the background of the students they teach, with more focus given to these aspects.

1.11 METHODOLOGY

1.11.1 Interpretive Research Paradigm

The research was done in an interpretive research paradigm since it aimed at understanding the meanings attributed to the experiences of the school principals when leading CLD schools. The interpretive paradigm presupposes that social reality is perceived based on the meanings and experiences of the participants of the study (Schwandt, 2014).

1.11.2 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative approach was used in this study because it involved collecting information on the experiences and actions of the principals and not numerical information. Qualitative methods are appropriate in situations where one wants to understand how people make meaning out of phenomena in certain social contexts (Tracy, 2020).

1.11.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was done using semi-structured interviews with five primary school principals and document analysis.

1.11.4 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain detailed accounts of the principals’ experience while at the same time allowing the researcher to discuss any issue that would come up during discussion. Semi-structured interviews are the best method for probing into the participants' perspective in depth without losing consistency (Demirci, 2024).

1.11.5 Study Population

The participants in the research were the principals of public rural primary schools within the uMkhanyakude District. There were five principals from five selected primary schools that took part in the study, since they directly managed situations arising from multiculturalism in class.

1.11.6 Sampling and Sample

Purposeful sampling strategy was employed to identify knowledgeable participants who had firsthand experience of school leadership in rural primary schools that were culturally and linguistically diverse. The criteria for selecting the participants included substantive or acting principal position, administrative experience, involvement with the diverse learner community and interviewability (Palinkas et al., 2015).

1.11.6.1 Challenges of purposeful sampling

Purposeful sampling does not allow statistical generalizations since participants are recruited based on their relevance instead of representativeness. This weakness was mitigated in this research through setting inclusion criteria and giving a description of the context to enable evaluation of transferability to similar rural schools (Palinkas et al., 2015).

1.11.6.2 Trustworthiness

The aspect of trustworthiness was achieved via the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The elements formed the basis of a qualitative approach to establish the validity of the findings based on the participants' statements, documentation and an analytical process (Ahmed, 2024).

1.11.6.3 Credibility

The credibility of the research was enhanced by means of conducting semi-structured interviews, analyzing documents and verification of the interviews by participants. Comparing the evidence gathered from these sources allowed the researcher to establish both convergent and divergent evidence in the study.

1.11.6.4 Transferability

Transferability was ensured through giving detailed information about the rural schools involved in the study, the uMkhanyakude area and selection of participants, together with data analysis. Through this provision of information, it becomes easier to make an evaluation on the transferability of the findings (Ahmed, 2024).

1.11.6.5 Dependability

Reliability was assured through the documentation of all research steps, interviews, selection of documents, coding and development of themes. Such an audit trail helped to trace the research process, which is at the heart of reliability in qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

1.11.6.6 Confirmability of the Findings

The validity was enhanced by maintaining audio recordings, transcripts, documentation, notes on coding, and feedback from supervisors, thus ensuring that the interpretations could be traced to the initial data. This ensured that the findings would not be influenced by the personal biases of the researcher but by those of the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

1.11.6.7 Data Analysis

The interviews and documentary analysis were conducted via a process of familiarization, coding, categorizing of codes and developing themes, and finally validation of themes in relation to the research questions. The analysis involved induction where the perspective of the participants was considered, and then interpretation using CRP theory and Epstein's theory (Naeem et al., 2023).

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.12.1 Ethical Issues

The ethical clearance for conducting this study was sought at the University of South Africa, whereas data clearance was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Various ethical considerations including informed consent, voluntariness, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and cultural sensitivity have been kept in mind.

1.12.2 Informed Consent

Participants were briefed about the objective of the study, the process involved, use of recording devices, data management and the rights of participants prior to the data collection process. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview.

1.12.2.1 Harm and risk

In ensuring that the process of participation would not cause the subjects any physical, psychological, professional or social harm, the researcher ensured that questions asked were only in relation to the research and that any participant was not obliged to answer any of them.

1.12.2.2 Honesty and trust

This was achieved through accurate representation of the participants' accounts, separation of empirical data from interpretation, and documentation of the process through which the data was collected and analysed.

1.12.2.3 Privacy and confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by omitting any identifiers in the transcriptions of interviews and referring to participants by code names. All research materials were kept safe and utilized for research purposes only.

1.12.2.4 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation. The participants were made aware that they could refuse to answer questions or leave the study at any time.

1.13 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study only included people from the uMkhanyakude district. The study looked at how multiculturalism is taught in classrooms and how it is put into practice.

The research probably had some limits because it couldn't include all learners from different school groups, like private schools. Also, there wasn't enough information from education leaders, and the DoE in the uMkhanyakude district didn't have proper records. Plus, getting information from participants was difficult because of privacy issues.

1.14 Definition of Key Terms

a) Culture

According to Naik et al. (2023), culture can be defined as “the learned and shared meanings, values, beliefs, and practices through which groups make sense of and organize social reality.” In this research, culture has been considered dynamic in nature, not static since it is continuously influenced by social factors.

b) Stakeholders

A stakeholder is part of an educational institution or community and has duties towards it, along with a care for its success (Makwambeni et al., 2023).

c) Educator/Teacher

An educator or teacher, as defined by the Educators Employment Act 76 of 1998, is hired to do activities outside regular school hours, teach, or help others learn in any way. This also includes people who provide professional educational services, such as therapy or support from educational psychologists, at a school.

d) Ethnicity

Ethnicity is described as a type of group identity that is socially constructed and relates to cultural attributes, ancestry, language, religion, and traditions (ScotPHO, 2023). For this research, ethnicity is viewed as just another aspect of diversity among the learners and their communities.

e) Multiculturalism

In the context of this research, multiculturalism is defined as the acknowledgment and inclusion of several cultures, races, ethnicities and languages in the same educational setting (Banks, 2015).

f) Parent

A parent is defined as:

the parent or guardian of a learner

The person who has the legal right to take care of the learner.

The person responsible for making sure the learner's education at school is properly taken care of (SACE, 2020).

g) Multicultural education

Multicultural education means an approach to education where learning chances are made available equitably regardless of culture, race, language, religion, or socio-economic background (Banks, 2015).

1.15 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 – Overview and the Background of the Study

In chapter one, the study is introduced to establish the background, justification, research problem, research question, objectives and the aim of the study. Chapter one also identifies the scope of the study and the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter two -Literature Review

The second chapter is a critical review of literature on multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching, school leadership, parental involvement, language and equity. This chapter also pinpoints the research gap through which the uMkhanyakude study is situated in the body of literature.

Chapter three- Research Design and Methodology

This chapter elaborates on the choice and justification of an interpretivist qualitative case study approach, including participant selection, data collection, document analysis and data analysis. It demonstrates how the methodological decisions made were able to answer the research questions.

Chapter four- Data Analysis and Fi ndings, Interpretation and Presentation

Chapter 4 discusses and analyses the empirical results obtained through interviews and documents. The results are classified under themes related to the research questions and discussed considering CRP, Epstein’s theory and the pertinent literature.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations.

The Chapter 5 is an analysis of the findings as per the research questions and concludes the study by giving recommendations based on the findings of the study. The limitations of the study are identified, along with future research areas.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review summarizes the research that has been conducted on a particular subject area. It identifies knowledge and research gaps. This review positions the leadership experiences of principals at uMkhanyakude primary schools in relation to multicultural education, equity and culturally responsive leadership. Evidence regarding curriculum and teaching culturally responsive ways with various learners is provided in the review of research done in South Africa by Athiemoolam and Vermaak (2021). The review also provides insights regarding care, support and academic achievement of learners and how it is intertwined with educators' understanding of multiple ways of achieving critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Additionally, the review describes the importance of family and the community in the achievement of the school goals and positive academic outcomes (Epstein et al., 2019) and provides insights on multicultural education in South Africa. It describes research and practice gaps regarding leadership in resource-constrained rural primary schools.

2.2 CONCEPTS OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

2.2.1 What is Culture in the South African Context?

In the present research, culture refers to the dynamic process of learning meanings, values, practices, and identities that are reproduced through social interactions. According to Naik et al. (2023), culture shapes perceptions about social reality of groups while Banks (2015) points out the interaction between cultural identity, language, ethnicity, class and other factors of diversity in educational institutions. The dynamism of culture is particularly important for South Africa since learners in schools belong to different linguistic, ethnic, religious, and historical backgrounds. Thus, culture should not be regarded as an immutable trait of an individual or group as it reflects and forms through relationships, institutions, and social transformations. The definition of culture is related to multicultural education since school leaders and teachers must recognize common identities and diversity among learners without stereotypes. Culture patterning may have various forms (Figure 1).

Cultural patterning takes various forms as demonstrated in Figure 1:

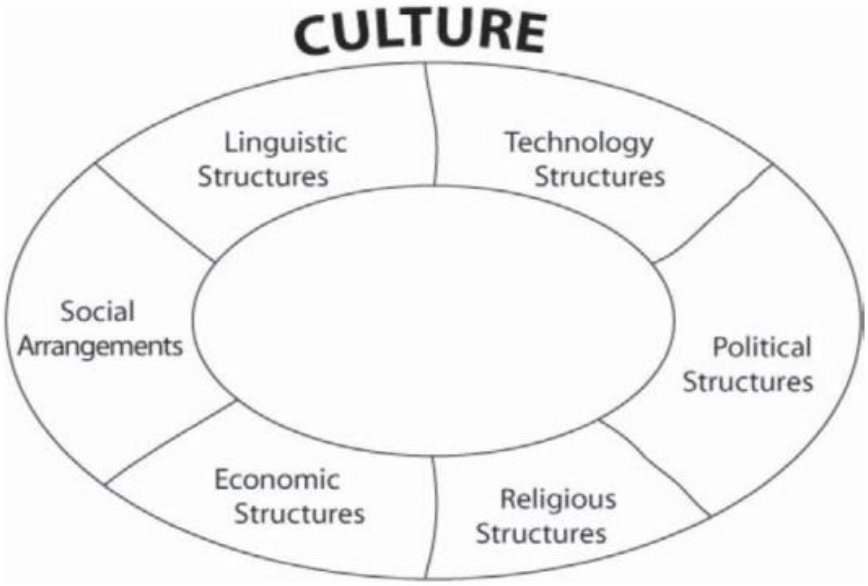


Figure 1: Forms of Cultural Patterning (DomNwachukwu, 2019)

2.2.2 Principles of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education can mean an idea, a movement to change how education works, or a process, as Banks explained in 2013. Multicultural education is about making sure that every student, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, or ethnic, racial, and cultural background, has an equal opportunity to learn and do well in school. Multicultural education looks at how different factors like race, ethnicity, social class, gender, religion, language, special needs, sexual orientation including being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and other cultural influences impact how students learn and act. Multicultural education considers how these factors, either by themselves or together, influence the way students act. Multicultural educators use the term intersectionality to describe how different factors work together to influence how students act, as explained by Grant and Zwier in 2012 and by Grant and Sleeter in 1986. The factors in the school system that should be changed to bring in multicultural education are listed below:

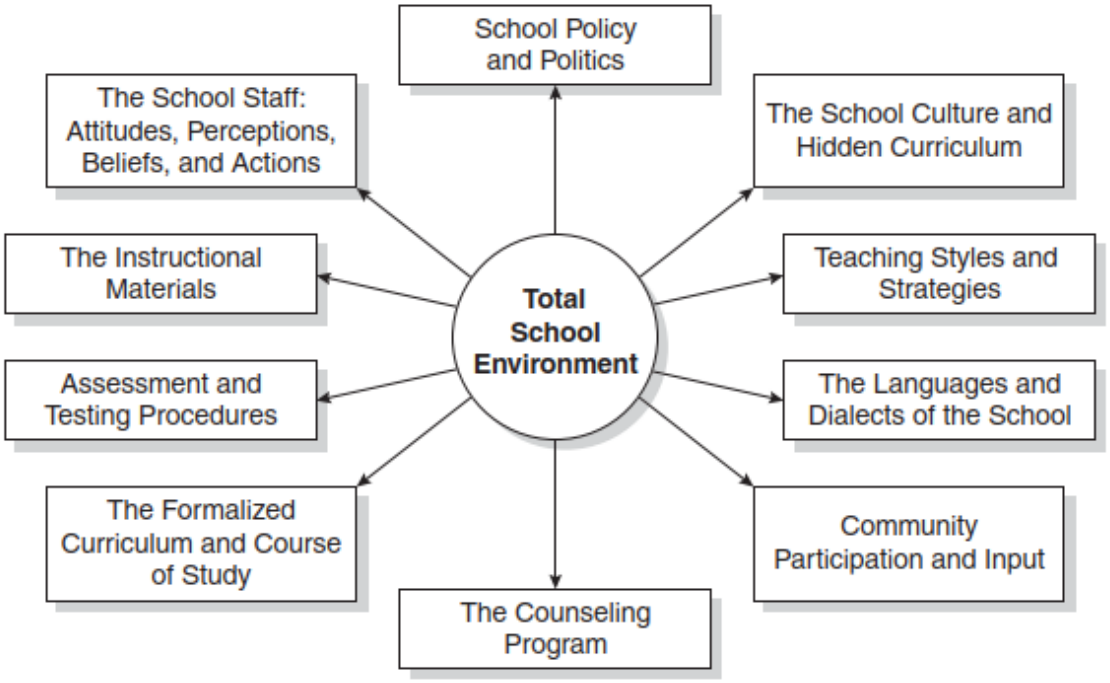


Figure 2: Total School Environment (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010)

People who only see the world through their own culture's lens miss out on important parts of what it means to be human and end up stuck in a narrow view of culture and ethnicity. These people also can't really understand their own cultures completely because they're limited by their narrow cultural views.

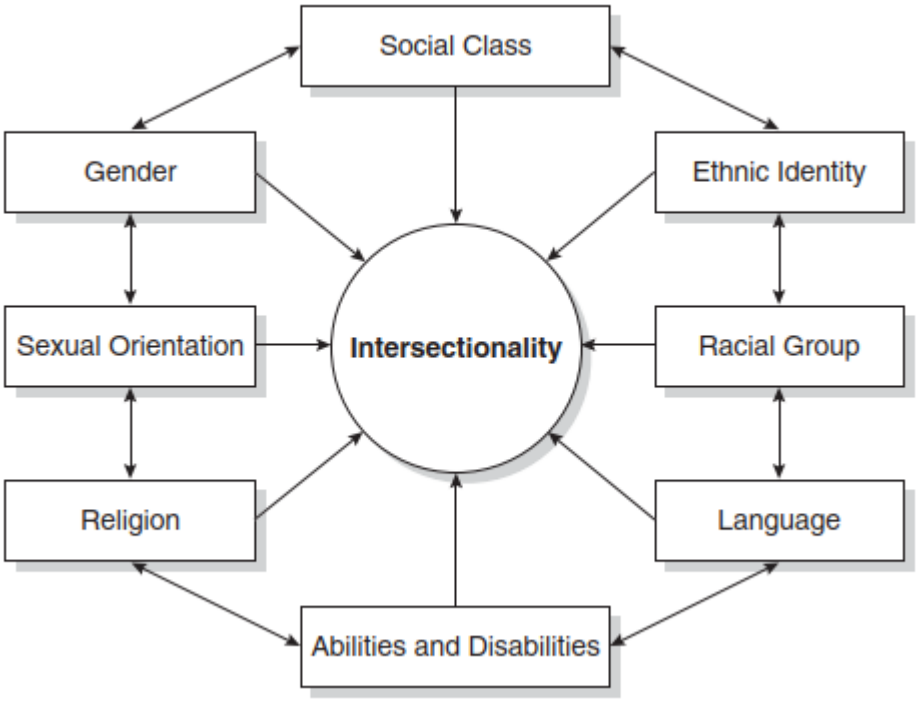


Figure 3: Intersection of Diversity Variables

A key goal of multicultural education is to help individuals better understand themselves by looking at their own experiences from the perspective of different cultures. Multicultural education teaches that when people learn about and understand different cultures, they are more likely to show respect. Another important goal of multicultural education is to offer students various cultural, ethnic, and language choices. A key goal of multicultural education is to help all students develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge they need to function effectively in their own cultural communities, in the country's main culture, and in various ethnic cultures, both inside and outside their own (Banks, 2013). One important goal of multicultural education is to reduce the pain and unfair treatment that people from certain ethnic and racial backgrounds experience because of their race, looks, and culture. Another aim of multicultural education is to help students learn the reading, writing, and math skills they need to succeed in a world that is global and full of technology. Students in cities like New York, London, Paris, and Berlin will have to compete for jobs with students from countries like India and Pakistan, as Darling-Hammond explained in 2010.Multicultural education thinks that learning about different cultures helps students gain important skills that are useful for success in a global and connected world.

2.3 MULTICULTURALISM IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

2.3.1 Challenges Multiculturalism Brings to Education in South Africa

People are unsure about what multicultural education really means, which makes it hard to teach effectively in that setting. Diaz (1992) says that in multicultural classrooms, some students are considered to be part of groups whose cultural traits match better with the school's culture, rules, and what is expected, and these students are more likely to do well in school compared to those whose cultures don't fit as well with these things. Teaching about different cultures is important because it helps students understand and connect with people from many different backgrounds around the world. It also helps them learn how all people are linked together in many ways, and how everyone's lives are connected.

2.3.1.1 Ethnicity

Teachers have used various methods to teach about different cultures in the school curriculum. One these is the contributions approach, which focuses on holidays and special events such as Africa Day and Heritage Day. Diaz (1992) says that some teachers have used the additive approach to add cultural content into their school lessons. In this method, cultural content, ideas, and themes are added to the curriculum without changing its main structure, goals, or key features. This is usually done by including a multicultural topic in a curriculum that stays the same in other areas. Most of the time, cultural celebrations, activities, and content are included in the curriculum as part of existing lessons and follow the usual methods of teaching.When these methods are used, the selection of people, events, and ways of understanding ethnic groups and women often reflects the beliefs and standards of the dominant culture rather than those from other cultural groups.A 2019 report from BusinessTech says that 62% of teachers are working in classrooms where at least 10% of the students speak a language different from the one being taught. Classrooms in South Africa are considered the most culturally diverse in the Southern African region. A study study done by Den Brok and Levy in 2005 found that there is a clear connection between students' ethnic background, teachers' ethnic background, how students view themselves, and their school performance.

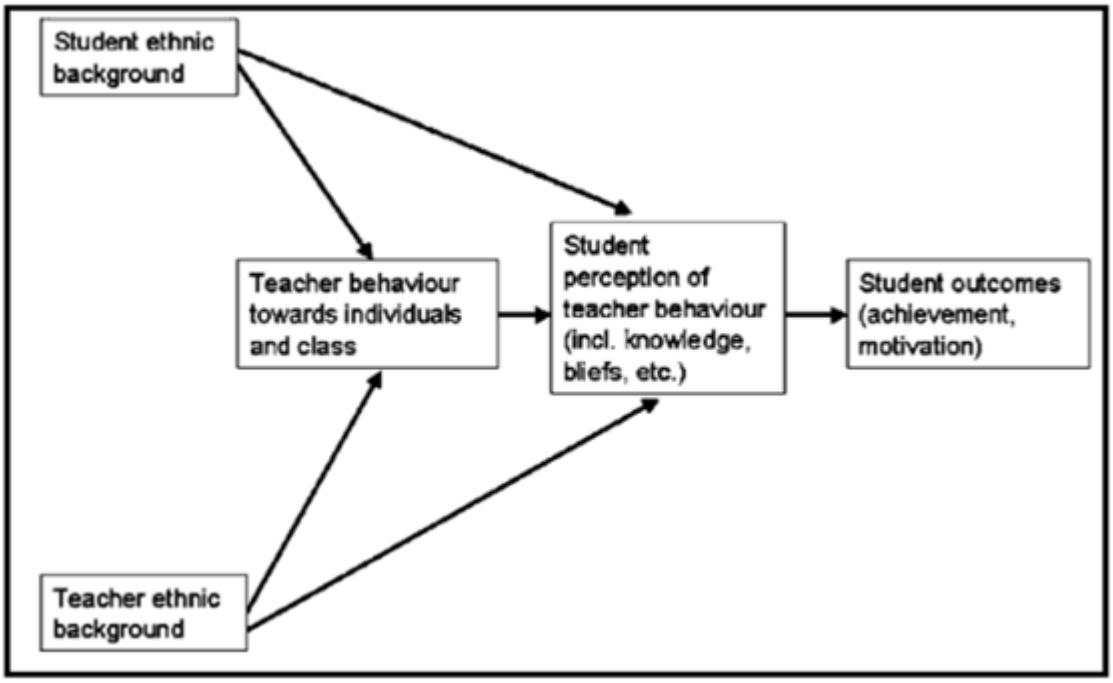


Figure 4: Effect of Ethnicity on Students' Perceptions and Outcomes (Den Brok & Levey, 2005)

2.3.1.2 Racism and inequality

There are social stresses in many countries where people connect physical features to social values and behavior. This is a form of racism. (Jack Tan, 2020). Racial stereotypes occur in South Africa and are often apparent in interracial/intercultural schools. Stereotyping often results in learners having negative attitudes towards people in different ethnic groups. Racial stereotyping is often found in South African schools and universities and lead to learners having negative attitudes towards members of different ethnic groups. (Govender, 2004) It was pointed out that one of the major goals of multicultural education was to ameliorate the condition of Black children and youth, people of color and racial minorities, and to eliminate the inequities they experienced. However, this goal has not been given priority and has not been explicitly stated in many of the accompanying pedagogical frames. (Lanson-Billings, 1995) According to the South African Human Rights Commission, 62% of 1 729 respondents reported experiencing racism at some stage while studying at school. It is believed that the major obstacle confronting South African Schools with a high multi-cultural and multi-lingual student population is the inability of educators to understand, interpret and interpret negative attitudes of students in a culturally appropriate manner. The lack of adequate education in the field of Inter-Cultural Education can aggravate

the situation (Mthembu, 2001). Violating community standards with behavioral approaches to teaching. Generally, recommendations for teaching presume that students are treated fairly and have equal opportunity to learn. Data shows that these assumptions are not always accurate regarding African American students. Some of the situations described below affect teaching and learning for all students. Suspension and Expulsion: Suspension and expulsion of African American students happens at higher rates than other ethnic groups. Suspensions and expulsions remove students from the opportunity to learn and negatively impact the teaching and learning environment. Perceived Disruptiveness: Promoting and developing positive classroom participation regarding providing opportunities for and encouraging questions and responses to classroom stimuli may benefit some students and negatively impact the classroom and teaching environment for others if questions are perceived as disruptive or disrespectful. COVID-19: The Corona Virus and associated disruptions negatively impacted all students and teachers and created challenges for remote teaching and learning. Additionally, the disruptions exacerbated social inequities and created additional challenges for African Americans and other ethnic minorities. Public schools in areas that are near cities and in the countryside, which make up 75% of the school system in South Africa, are usually too crowded, don't have enough resources, and don't work properly. Many schools have been ignored for a long time, leading to poor conditions like broken buildings and not enough clean restrooms. The big differences in education in South Africa have been around for a long time because of the history of apartheid. In that time, schools in white communities had the right resources, but schools in black communities were given much less and had a harder time. Unfortunately, these differences still exist today, and they influence how well a child can learn depending on where they were born, how much money their family has, and the colour of their skin.

2.3.1.3 Lack of parental support

The Department of Education provides less support, so parents must pay more for school fees. Because of this, schools are in a difficult financial situation. To deal with this, parents and schools can work together on fundraising activities. This teamwork is important because parents are playing a bigger role in helping schools. When parents and schools join forces, it helps the school and benefits the students. Parents

are therefore asked to take part in cultural events and express their opinions using the language they feel most at ease with. Froyen (as cited by Coetzee et al., 2008) gives the reasons why parents should get involved: Teachers need to know about the parents' feelings and the situation at home. Teachers can share details about what students need and what the school expects. Parents have the right to be informed about how their children are behaving and how they are doing in school.

Parents can be a valuable resource. Parents should not just be involved in some parts of school activities, but they should take part in all areas of what the school does. Parents from different cultural backgrounds might have trouble getting involved because they don't speak the language well, aren't familiar with how the school system works, or feel unsure about themselves. Parents who come from families with less money or not much education might have a hard time getting involved with the school.

2.3.1.4 Learners' learning style

Some students learn better by seeing things, while others learn better by listening or doing hands-on activities (Reach & Teach, 2023). As a teacher, it's important to notice and handle these differences. According to Govender (2004), language comes in many different forms, which can be seen in regional or class-based dialects. Language is a shared way that people use agreed-upon signs and symbols to talk to each other and understand the world around them. Teachers need to consider cultural differences when teaching in classes with students from various cultural backgrounds. Background in this case is a very big barrier to so many children in schools. Some other learners might not feel at ease during the lesson times, not because the teacher isn't doing a good job, but because of their own personal experiences and background. The ways teachers teach reflect their beliefs and ideas, so they are more than just actions that happen in a classroom.

Most people believe that good teachers have many different skills and methods they can use. They know how to apply these skills in smart and flexible ways to handle the different needs that come up in the classroom. Most teachers use group teaching – first of all, with group teaching, teachers can't address each student's unique needs. Secondly, because the classrooms are very big, teachers can't give a lot of information quickly. Thirdly, teachers use English to teach, which leads to bad results for black students.

The reason they come to school every day is to improve their lives and bring honor to their parents. Seeing other learners in the learning area who have a lot of advantages can make some privileged children feel less motivated to go to school, which might lead to more young students dropping out. Teachers in school should work on making learning more effective for different kinds of learners and create a welcoming environment where all students feel at ease and excited about starting their day and going to school every single day. By doing this, fewer people will stop attending. Teaching in a classroom with students from different cultures requires being flexible, understanding different cultures, and being open to changing how you teach to suit the varied needs of each student. By welcoming different backgrounds and building a classroom where everyone feels valued, teachers can help all students have better and more positive learning experiences.

2.3.2 Influence of multiculturalism on Education

There are several misunderstandings that need to be addressed regarding how multiculturalism affects education in South Africa. One common misunderstanding is that multicultural education is a program or approach that mainly benefits immigrants, white people, people with low incomes, women, and other groups that are often treated unfairly (Chavez, 2010; Glazer, 1997). When teachers see multicultural education as just studying different groups, it gets pushed aside and cannot really become part of the big changes in how schools work. Another wrong idea about multicultural education is the belief that it is a movement that opposes the West and Western civilization. One common mistake about multicultural education is that people think it will split the country and weaken its sense of being united. The idea that multicultural education will split the country depends on the belief that the country is already one. Even though we are united country politically, society shows deep divisions based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and class.

2.3.3 Teaching and Learning: Equity Pedagogy

An equity pedagogy happens when teachers use teaching methods and strategies that help students from different racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds succeed academically. Some teaching methods that work well with students from different racial, ethnic, social-class, and language backgrounds include approaches that take

into account the learning styles and cultural backgrounds of these students (Boykin, 2012; Moll & Spear-Ellinwood, 2012; Au, 2011; Gay, 2010), as well as cooperative learning strategies (Horn, 2012; Lotan, 2012). These methods have been found to be effective by teachers.

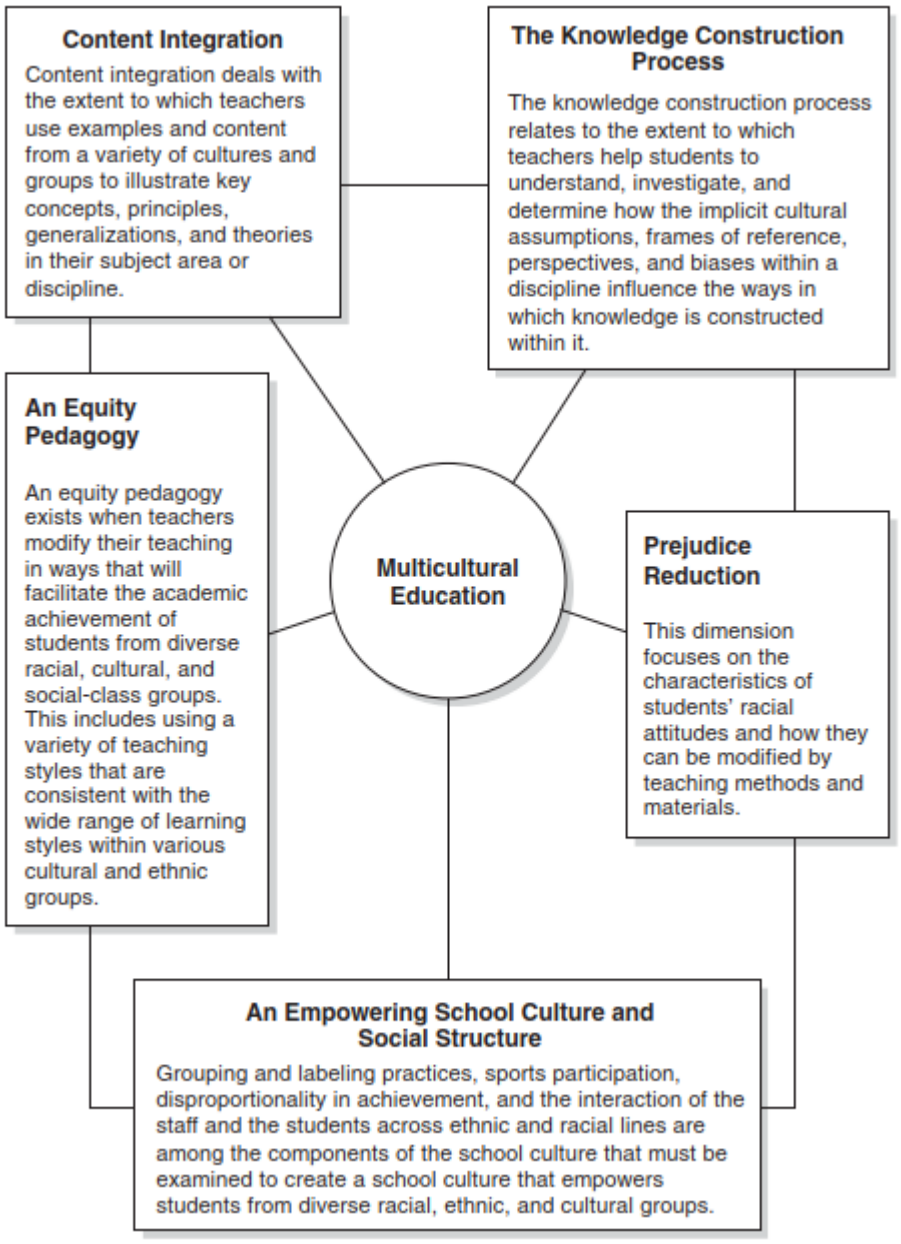


Figure 5: Dimensions of Multicultural Education (Banks, 2015)

2.4 STRATEGIES TO TEACH IN A MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

2.4.1 The School Staff

The school staff, including administrators, teachers, counselors, and support workers, should represent the various races and cultures that make up South African society.

The students learn about how adults feel towards different races, ethnicities, and languages by observing and talking to the people who work and interact at the school.Students should have the chance to meet school leaders, teachers, and counselors from various races, ethnicities, and language backgrounds. This helps them understand that American society values and respects people from many different ethnic, racial, cultural, and language groups.

2.4.2 School Staff Attitudes and Expectations

School districts need to provide regular training for teachers so they can set high standards for students who come from low-income families and students of color. This training should also help teachers better understand the cultural backgrounds and experiences of these students (Green, 2012; Howard, 2010). Today, more students in schools are coming from families with only one parent, or from families where the parents need more help, or from backgrounds that are very different from their teachers' own (Galindo & Pucino, 2012). Many of these students have health issues, low motivation, and special learning needs that can really challenge even the most experienced and thoughtful teachers.A lot of these students are very smart and have unique talents, but their abilities aren't always obvious, and they don't appear on standard intelligence tests (Ford, 2013).People with skill gaps may not show their true academic strengths and talents.Teachers should get special training to learn how to spot and support the untapped talents and skills of many students from various backgrounds, such as students of color, students who speak a language other than English at home, and students from low-income families (Au, 2011; Mallinson et al., 2011).

2.4.3 The Curriculum

The school curriculum needs to change so that students learn about ideas, happenings, problems, and topics from various ethnic backgrounds and different ways of looking at things (Banks, 2013; Au, 2011). Reconceptualizing the curriculum and making ethnic content a key part of a completely new curriculum is different from just adding ethnic content to the existing curriculum. Ethnic content can be included in the curriculum without altering it or changing its main assumptions.

2.4.4 Parent Participation

Because of the big challenges schools are dealing with right now, it's probably not possible for schools to do their main jobs—helping students learn important skills and become good citizens in a democracy and global community unless they get help from parents and the public (Banks, 2013; Comer, 2012; Galindo & Pucino, 2012).

2.4.5 Teaching Strategies

The multicultural curriculum needs to be taught using methods that are engaging, interactive, tailored to individual needs, and based on teamwork (Horn, 2012; Lotan, 2012). The teacher should pay attention to and give proper recognition to the voices of students from various racial, cultural, linguistic, and gender backgrounds. Multicultural content naturally brings out strong feelings, personal experiences, disagreements, and conversations between people. So, students need to have plenty of chances to share their feelings and emotions, talk with their friends and classmates, and express anger or pride when discussing topics about different cultures.

2.4.6 Teaching Materials

The school district must have in place and implement a policy on the choice of the instructional material. The materials chosen must incorporate the histories and experiences of different cultures, languages, and races and must also give the issues and concepts from the perspective of those races. It is not enough to have a reference to culture in a textbook or other materials, but this information must be incorporated into the main content and not as a separate feature. This is because in the old textbooks, the histories of different races were limited to sidebars or sections.

2.4.7 Monitoring

The implementation of multicultural education programs will need the monitoring of how the goals set out at the school level have been implemented in the classrooms and equitably achieved by learners. Monitoring can make use of classroom observation, achievement and participation data, disciplinary record and access to services without making individual blame part of the evaluation process. According to Datnow and Park (2018), the use of school data must take place with regard to equity

since seemingly neutral data could perpetuate existing inequalities. It is thus essential that the whole school participates in the process since the principal, teachers, School Governing Body and support staff are responsible for the identification of the gap between the intention and implementation of policies.

2.5 Research Gap

Within the researched literature, the focus is largely on the challenges of implementing diversity in the classroom and overlooking the challenges of leadership which facilitates or restricts culturally responsive leadership. Some scholars have looked at how teachers in different South African classrooms, especially the former Model C schools, adapted to the existing classroom situations and diversity (Athiemoolam & Vermaak, 2021). Others have looked at teaching and learning in classrooms with diverse cultural backgrounds (Sachkova et al., 2021). Most of the studies have shown that there is a need to integrate various aspects of the school, including the family, and further show how principals at all levels are able to integrate these aspects with the available means (Foulidi & Papakitsos, 2022).

Given the situation and research gaps above, the current study focuses on the principals of historically marginalized, multicultural, and rural primary schools in uMkhanyakude District. The study explores how the principals integrate and balance various leadership and stakeholder engagement demands in the rural area, especially concerning teaching and learning. Given the challenges and constraints in the area, the study is particularly timely, as it sheds light on how principals integrate aspects of governance concerning educational resources in the area.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter looked at the challenges that school leaders face in a school with a diverse cultural background. The chapter investigated what multiculturalism means and how the idea is explained. Other topics that were talked about include the difficulties of teaching in a multicultural setting, how school leaders can help promote multiculturalism in schools, what school principals can do to carry out strategies for teaching in a multicultural environment, and the importance of involving parents.School leadership was also talked about as the way of influencing others to

help reach the school's vision.The multicultural classroom was defined.This chapter explains the research methods that were used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter provided explanation for the research design and methodology which would help answer the research questions. It provided the interpretation and justification for the use of the interpretative qualitative methodology, case study design, data collection, population and sample selection, data analysis and trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The chapter further highlighted the way interviews and documentation have been integrated to make the results interpretable within the context of the participating institutions.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research was conducted using an interpretivist research paradigm employing a qualitative research method because it was intended to explore the meaning that school principals constructed from their experiences concerning the problems associated with multicultural classrooms. The qualitative research method focuses on the meanings, experiences, and context of participants as opposed to quantification (Tracy, 2020). This approach was suitable for the research questions because the latter entailed an exploration of the practice of leadership, stakeholders, teachers, and limitations of rural schools.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE STUDY

Case studies involve an intensive analysis of a defined phenomenon in its natural setting, especially when such a phenomenon and the setting cannot be separated from one another. This method allows the researcher to use various sources of information and to see how institutional, social, and contextual factors influence the experiences of participants (Remenyi, 2022). In the current study, the cases included the participating rural primary schools, and the phenomenon was the experience of principals when dealing with classroom diversity.

The inquiry covered a limited range of primary schools. The purpose was to understand principals' workplace experiences. The case study design is appropriate to capture a sharedeliminated experience, especially when theory development is not

the main objective of the research. In the present case, the aim was not to undertake theory development or carry out reductionist exercises. Remenyi (2022) avers that case study research is appropriate when a contemporary organizational issue is required to be studied. Stake (2010) also states that the case study research methodology is appropriate to study an issue when the researcher cannot control the various situational and contextual factors.

A bounded case can be studied through instrumental case-study research to understand a broader case (Stake, 1995). Five rural primary schools in this study created a boundary through which the study of multicultural school leadership could be undertaken. There are several strengths of case study research, including the opportunity to integrate theory and practice (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Thus, incorporating the Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence with the research participants' accounts and supporting documents was justified.

Considering the nature of case study research, comparison of recurring and varying phenomena was possible while considering the unique situation of each case. The researcher could consider various perspectives by combining the principals' accounts and evidence from the school. The presence of case study design facilitated the research to examine school improvement plans and records. Furthermore, the study assisted in understanding the rationale for professional development and evaluating the financial resources allocated to school improvement (Bowen, 2009).

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The ethical approval to undertake this study was granted by the University of South Africa, and permission was obtained to carry out the study in public schools by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education before conducting fieldwork. These methods were used since they complemented each other in collecting information about the experiences of the principals and their institutions.

3.4.1 Interview

The focus of qualitative interviewing is to define and understand participants' perspectives, judgments and rationale. Covering the same areas in an interview requires the use of semi-structured techniques (Demirci, 2024). In this study, principles had varied and comprehensive perspectives regarding leadership, cultural diversity and diversity in the school community; and about the limits of the school in providing education that they were not able to express through their written work. Interviews were the most appropriate technique to employ to elicit this kind of information.

Five school principals were interviewed. Each participant was presented with a set of open-ended questions on a topic that comprised the core of the interview. The rest of the interview was directed by the participant. To gain additional information on leadership practices, follow up questions on examples provided were posed. The interviews focused on principals' leadership in the context of school community, teachers and other stakeholders, as well as on the means available to the school in supporting various forms of school community diversity.

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interview

While allowing sufficient flexibility to consider additional issues, a semi-structured approach to the design of the interviews enabled the researcher to maintain control over the general direction of the exercise (Bryman, 2016). It was essential for the researcher to explore various school contexts, and these were of particular interest given that each of the principals being researched operated within a different context. The nature of the interviews allowed for the consideration of additional issues.

The researcher performed interviews with five rural primary school principals within the uMkhanyakude district. The duration of each of the interviews was between 2 and 2.5 hours. The researcher arranged the interviews to occur after teaching time to reduce disruption of the school. The school principals gave consent to have the interviews recorded. The researcher provided the school principals with a copy of the questions to be asked and the general purpose of the research. The researcher designed the questions and interviews to allow for additional clarity to be provided by the school principals.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis helped to further validate the information obtained from interviews through a non-reactive form of institutionally generated evidence. The documents chosen for analysis were purposively chosen on the basis that they were pertinent to the research questions and included School Improvement Plans, minutes of SGB and SMT meetings, professional development schedules, finances and resources allocation documents, academic performance summaries, disciplinary records and district monitoring reports. Adopting the approach suggested by Bowen (2009), the researcher first evaluated the pertinence and authenticity of each document before analyzing those portions of the document that related to leadership, stakeholders' involvement, resources, language, equity and multiculturalism. The excerpts from these documents were thus coded along with the interview data and categorized.

3.5 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

3.5.1Target Population

In qualitative research, defining the target population is essential for establishing the empirical parameters of the study and ensuring that data collection aligns directly with the research aim and questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The target population for this study comprised public primary school principals serving in rural, historically disadvantaged educational contexts within the uMkhanyakude District Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa.

Primary school principals were selected as the primary unit of analysis because they hold the ultimate administrative, instructional, and governance authority within basic education institutions. While classroom teachers and departmental heads manage day-to-day instructional delivery, school principals are uniquely positioned at the intersection of policy execution, School Governing Body (SGB) governance, and financial resource allocation under the Quintile funding system, and community engagement. Consequently, their lived experiences provide the analytical depth required to understand how multicultural leadership is operationalised under conditions of extreme rurality and linguistic complexity.

3.5.2 Sampling strategy and criteria for site and school selection

This study employed a non-probability, purposive sampling strategy to select both the research site and the participating basic education institutions. Purposive sampling

involves the deliberate selection of settings, institutions, or individuals based on their possession of specific characteristics or information-rich experiences relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Situated in the far north-eastern region of KwaZulu-Natal along the national borders of Mozambique and Eswatini, the uMkhanyakude district features a unique cross-border demographic profile. Classrooms accommodate indigenous isiZulu-speaking learners alongside cross-border immigrant and minority language populations (speaking Xitsonga, Siswati, and Portuguese dialects). This creates pronounced multi-dialectal and translanguaging dynamics that test the limits of national language-in-education policies.

The district is categorized among the most economically under-resourced rural areas in South Africa, characterized by significant infrastructural backlogs, high unemployment, and reliance on social grants. Conducting the study within this district allowed for the examination of multicultural leadership under acute financial scarcity.

While extensive research has examined diversity management in metropolitan centers and former Model C schools, rural border districts such as uMkhanyakude remain under-researched in South African educational management literature.

At the institutional level, we purposively sampled five public primary schools across the selected circuits of the uMkhanyakude District. The sampled schools met the following criteria:

Public primary schools within the sampled district offering Grades R to 7 were included in the study. Other schools such as secondary public and private schools and urban public primary schools were excluded from the study. This was to ensure sameness in structure and developmental level of the schools sampled.

Public primary schools in sampled district within Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 (no-fee schools) were included in the study. Schools within the sampled Quintiles rely heavily on equity grant and other subsidies set by the government. These grants help to advance and improve the public primary school infrastructure in the district.

Selected primary schools demonstrated documented linguistic and socio-cultural diversity within their learner enrolments, including multi-dialectal and multi-grade classroom environments.

3.5.3 Criteria for selection of Principal participants

Leadership role

Participants were required to hold a substantive appointment as a primary school principal (or acting principal with a minimum of two consecutive years in the position) within a public primary school in the uMkhanyakude district.

Professional administrative experience

Selected principals possessed a minimum of three years of administrative and instructional leadership experience within rural primary school settings. This threshold ensured that participants possessed established, nuanced insights into local governance micro-politics, SGB dynamics, and district-level policy implementation.

Direct engagement with diversity

Participants served in primary schools actively managing socio-culturally and linguistically diverse learner cohorts, multi-grade teaching structures, or cross-border learner integration challenges.

Voluntary informed consent

Principals expressed formal willingness to participate in multi-stage qualitative data collection, including audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews and the provision of relevant institutional documents for analysis.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA PRESENTATION

An iterative thematic analysis technique was employed. In step one, there was careful reading of the interview transcriptions and selected documents as a way of getting acquainted with the data. In step two, there was coding of meaningful excerpts to provide descriptions of actions, experiences, difficulties and leadership responses. Step three entailed organizing the codes into categories and comparison of the same within the five cases. Step four involved formulating tentative themes and subthemes from the categories. In step five, there was examination of the themes against the codes, documents and research questions in order to address the inconsistencies and overlaps between the themes. The last step entailed theme interpretation through CRP and Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory. The above-mentioned sequence is consistent with the systematic thematic analysis technique suggested by Naeem et al. (2023).

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH

The issue of trustworthiness was handled by means of four aspects which include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These four aspects have been identified by Ahmed (2024) as the key pillars of rigour in the field of qualitative research. They were achieved in this study through participant validation, data triangulation, descriptive context, clear analytic trail and preservation of links between interpretation and data.

3.7.1 Credibility

The credibility was enhanced using member checks and triangulation. After transcribing the interviews, the participants were asked to confirm whether the transcripts correctly conveyed the meaning that they wanted to convey. The data from the interviews were also crosschecked with documents from the schools such as school improvement plans, minutes of meetings and professional development documentation. The convergence of information enhanced credibility while divergent information was kept for further analysis.

3.7.2 Transferability

The transferability was assured through thick description of the research context of uMkhanyakude, the selected rural primary schools and the criteria that informed the selection process along with the conditions of data collection. Instead of claiming generalizability, the study offered sufficient information on the context in order to enable readers decide on the applicability of the results in other rural multicultural settings (Ahmed, 2024).

3.7.3 Dependability

The dependability of the study was assured by an audit trail that traced the steps involved in data collection, transcription, document selection, coding, categorization and theme refinement. The decisions that were made throughout the process were captured for tracking the journey from data to results. The process assurance is important for enhancing dependability since it allows for the research process to be inspected and not replication (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Issues pertaining to confirmability were dealt with through the retention of the recorded audio tapes, transcripts of interviews conducted, excerpts from the documentary, coding and analysis of results, which allowed for the linkage of interpretation with the evidence. This was done using quotes from participants and examples drawn from the documentary to establish the link between the evidence and the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics governed the entire research process from the point of clearance to reporting. Ethical clearance was sought from the University of South Africa prior to the research while clearance to conduct the research was granted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education as well as the schools involved. The guidelines of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and non-harm were observed during the study. This was because the participants were talking about leadership practices and challenges in their workplaces.

3.8.1 Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality was done by controlling access to the research files and by de-identifying all transcripts and research findings. The names of the five schools and the school principals who participated in the research were all identified by code names, and all the quotes were presented without revealing unnecessary details that might identify individual persons.

3.8.2 Anonymity

Participant and school codes were used in the reporting phase to maintain anonymity. This was done as the experiences being shared by the participants involved professional criticism of institutional and departmental activities. This is why non-analytical information was either omitted or generalized.

3.8.3 Privacy

The confidentiality of the information provided by the participants was assured through limiting the questions to those that were directly related to the study and through

allowing the participant the right to not answer any questions which he or she found too personal. The interview took place in an environment conducive to confidential discussion.

3.8.4 Informed Consent

The procedure of obtaining informed consent was done before the participants took part in the study. Each of the principals was provided with information on the objectives of the study, process, time frame for conducting the interview, the audio recording of the session, the use of the collected information, and also that he/she can withdraw from the process at any point without consequences.

3.8.5 Voluntary Participation

It was entirely voluntary on the part of all the participants involved in the research. The principals were not forced to take part in the research, but it was made known to them that they could choose not to answer the question posed to them.

3.8.6 The Role of the Researcher

The responsibility of the researcher was to make sure that the interviews were conducted and that the relevant documents were collected for interpretation of the findings without forcing preconceived ideas into the participant's story. The researcher paid reflexive attention to his/her own assumptions as well as his/her professional knowledge about the field of education. Interview guide, participant validation, document triangulation and supervision were used to mitigate such risk.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The methodology of this study was discussed in this chapter. Description of the five primary schools and principals that took part in this study, purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, documentation and the process of thematic analysis were explained. Also, trustworthiness and ethical considerations taken into account were stated. All these issues formed the background for discussion of the results in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses and discusses the results that have been produced through semi-structured interviews conducted with five participating primary school principals as well as from the analysis of relevant institutional documents. The results are arranged thematically and sub-thematically using the findings that were obtained in the study. Documentation is used to verify and qualify the statements made by the principals, whereas the discussion is based on the relevant literature in conjunction with the theoretical framework of this study. The four sub-research questions guiding this section were:

- What challenges do school principals experience in leading teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms?
- What competencies and forms of support do school principals identify as necessary for teachers to respond effectively to multicultural classrooms?
- How do school principals experience and facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders in supporting multicultural learners?
- What strategies do school principals propose or implement to address the challenges of multicultural classrooms?

The analysis was organised into five themes, each contributing to one or more research questions rather than functioning as an isolated finding:

- Theme 1 examined principals' experiences and understandings of multiculturalism and informed the main research question and Sub-question 1.
- Theme 2 examined the principal's role in curriculum implementation, teacher support and stakeholder engagement and contributed particularly to Sub-questions 2 and 3.
- Theme 3 examined leadership approaches for future-focused change and contributed to Sub-questions 3 and 4.
- Theme 4 examined supervision, feedback and professional development and contributed primarily to Sub-questions 2 and 4.

- Theme 5 examined the challenges arising from learner background diversity, cultural differences and diverse learning needs and provided the empirical basis for Sub-questions 1 and 4.

The interpretation of these themes was guided by CRP and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory. CRP provided the analytical concepts of academic success, cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2021), while Epstein et al. (2019) provided a framework for interpreting the relationships among principals, teachers, families and communities. These frameworks were therefore used to explain not only what participants reported, but also how leadership practices supported or constrained inclusive multicultural teaching and learning.

4.2 PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

This information is given solely for providing the context needed for understanding the context of resource availability, linguistic diversity, enrolment trends and leadership dynamics. The biographical and institutional information is hence employed as contextual variables.

4.2.1 Profile of School 1

School 1 first started in 1992. It was made to help students who wanted to keep learning by making it easier for them to travel the long distances they had to cover. Students had to go more than thirty (30) kilometers to get to the nearest school.This school is in quintile 3 and serves students from grade R up to grade 7.It has 14 teachers and three non-teaching staff members, which includes the administrative clerk and the people who help with the school's nutrition program.The school is a primary school and gets help from the government's school nutrition program, which is part of the government's policy to support schools in areas where families have less money. Most of the school isn't inside walls, but there is fencing around the school buildings. All of their students are Zulu, and even the School Management Team (SMT) is made up of Zulus. The current Principal has been teaching for 30 years and has spent nine of those years serving as a Principal.It is now one of the top-performing schools in the uMkhanyakude district, and it has around 562 students attending. It offers a variety of curriculum packages that let students continue their education at

schools in the area after finishing Grade 7. The school does not charge any fees because of the difficult financial and social conditions around the school. Between 2021 and 2025, the school had an average pass rate of 95.80%.

Table 1: Learners' enrolment in the past 5 years – School 1

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolment	534	544	548	550	562

Table 2: Learners' performance in the past 5 years – School 1

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Pass rate (%)	90	91	100	100	98

4.2.2 Profile of School 2

In April 1995, School 2 was founded.This school is in Quintile 4 and serves students from grade R up to grade 7.It includes 23 staff members, such as the school management team, and 10 non-teaching workers like the school cleaner, security guard, administrative clerks, and people who assist with the school's meal program.School 2 is also a Section 21 school, which means it gets help from the DoE's school nutrition program as part of the government's plan to support schools in poorer areas.It is also in a rural area close to Jozini Local Municipality and the Department of Labour, and helps students from the nearby community.It is now the top-performing school in the Circuit.The school is surrounded by a fence and has access to clean water that comes through pipes, as well as electricity. It has problems with its facilities, like not enough restrooms and spaces for playing. The area is dealing with many social problems, like a lot of teenage pregnancies. It is made up of students from various cultural backgrounds, such as Zulu and Afrikaans. The principal of School 2 is Afrikaan, white, and has 29 years of teaching experience. The school uses English and Afrikaans as the languages for teaching and learning.

Table 3: Learners' enrolment in the past 5 years – School 2

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolment	788	888	700	689	723

Table 4: Learners' performance in the past 5 years – School 2

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Pass rate (%)	90	100	89	98	91

Table 5: Cultural mixes in the school – School 2

Culture	Zulu	Swati	Xitsonga	Sotho	Pedi	Afrikaans	Other	Total
% of learners	40	0	0	0	0	50	10	100

4.2.3 Profile of School 3

School 3 first opened its doors in early 1993. It was created because the local community's students couldn't fit into the nearby primary schools anymore, and all the building work for the infrastructure was done by the parents themselves from the start. The school's results have been mixed over time, but in recent years, there has been steady improvement, which is because both teachers and students have worked hard. School 3 gets help from the DoE's school nutrition program, which is part of the government's plan to support schools in areas where people don't have much money. All their students and staff come from the Zulu culture. The school has nine teachers, a department head, a deputy principal, and a principal. School 3 is a quintile 3 school that serves students from grade R up to grade 7. Between 2021 and 2025, the school had an average of 83.40% of students passing their matric exams. School 3 does not charge any fees because of its community's financial situation, and it is considered the top-performing school in the uMkhanyakude Circuit. The enrollment over the last five years, from 2021 to 2025, is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Learners' enrolment in the past 5 years – School 3

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolment	297	270	293	287	297

Table 7: Learners' performance in the past 5 years – School 3

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Pass rate (%)	87	83	80	81	86

4.2.4 Profile of School 4

School 4 is a public primary school that is in the River View Area, uMkhanyakade.The school teaches students from Grade R up to Grade 7 and is classified as a quintile 3 school.The school is a Section 21 school, which means the Department of Education gives it money and it takes care of buying supplies like paper and books, as well as doing its own repairs and upkeep, all under ABD functions. It is also classified as a no-fee school in quintile 3. It is now one of the top schools in the Circuit, with over 550 students attending. Nineteen teachers and nine support staff are involved in teaching and helping run the school. It offers a variety of curriculum options so students can choose different subjects to study after finishing Grade 7. The students at the school are supposed to pay school fees of R6 384 every year. It is also made up of a combination of black and white people. The Principal has over 30 years of teaching experience and 14 years of experience serving as a principal. Their teaching and learning are done in English and Afrikaans.The school is one of the most culturally diverse schools in the district, as shown below.

Table 8: Learners' enrolment in the past 5 years – School 4

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolment	500	510	515	530	550

Table 9: Learners' performance in the past 5 years – School 4

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025

Pass rate (%)	100	100	98	91	97

Table 10: Cultural mixes in the school – School 4

Culture	Zulu	Swati	Xitsonga	Sotho	Pedi	Afrikaans	Other	Total
% of learners	80	0	0	0	0	5	15	100

Table 11: Cultural mixes of the SMT – School 4

Culture	Zulu	Swati	Xitsonga	Sotho	Pedi	Afrikaans	Other	Total
% of SMTs	5	0	0	0	0	80	15	100

4.2.5 Profile of School 5

School 5 is a public primary school that is situated in the Mtubatuba Area, which is part of uMkhanyakude.School 5 is a quintile 4 school. The school asks for a yearly fee of R5 668.The school mainly has students who are white and black, and most of them speak Zulu.The main language used for teaching and learning is Zulu, and a small amount of English is also accepted. In a survey done in 2025, the school had 819 students and 28 teachers, which gave a student-teacher ratio of 30 to 1. It offers a variety of curriculum options that let students focus on different subjects after finishing Grade 7. The school teaches Grades R to 7. Between 2021 and 2025, the school had an average passing rate of 98.6%. The principal comes from a Zulu background and has 28 years of experience in teaching, with 10 of those years spent as a principal. The principal is a female staff member.

Table 12: Learners' enrolment in the past 5 years – School 5

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025

Enrolment	750	700	825	800	819

Table 13: Learners' performance in the past 5 years – School 5

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Pass rate (%)	98	97	100	100	98

Table 14: Culture(s)/Ethnicity of the SMT (2025) – School 5

Culture	Zulu	Swati	Xitsonga	Sotho	Pedi	Afrikaans	Other	Total
% of SMTs	70	0	0	5	0	10	15	100

4.3 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Table 15 below presents the biographical information about participants in the research study.

Table 15: Participants' Biographical Summary

Participants	Gender	Culture	Teaching experience	Grade that the school offers	Teaching experience as a Principal
Principal 1 (LPS)	Male	Zulu	30 years	R to 7	9 years
Principal 2 (JPS)	Male	Afrikaans	29 years	R to 7	16 years
Principal 3 (NPS)	Male	Zulu	29 years	R to 7	9 years
Principal 4 (MPS)	Male	Afrikaans	30 years	R to 7	14 years
Principal 5 (UPS)	Female	Zulu	28 years	R to 7	10 years

Principals were coded as Principal 1 to 5. Codes were allocated to each participant to preserve their anonymity. Biographical information was obtained from each participant prior to the interviews.

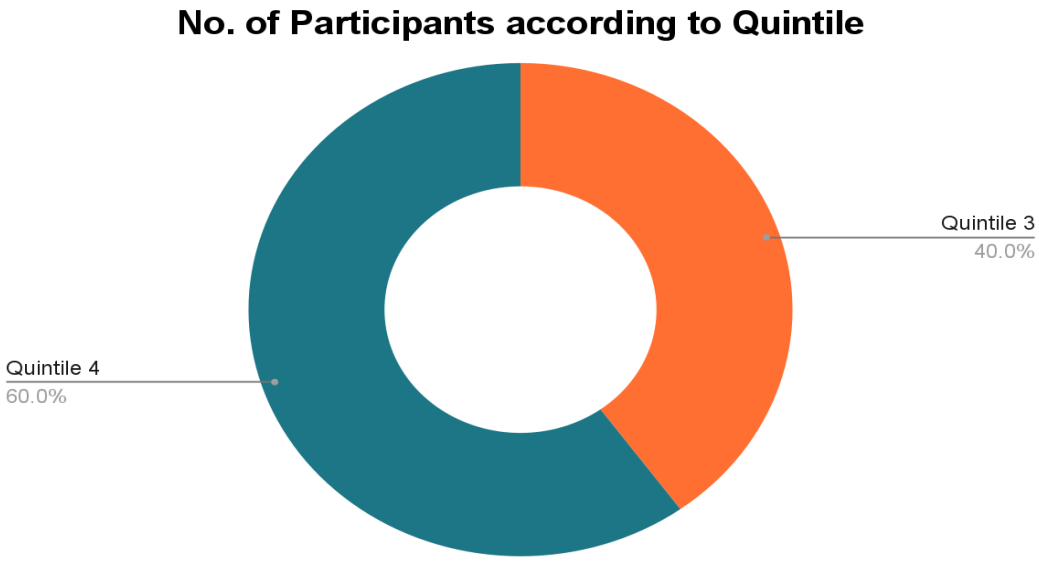


Figure 6: Number of participants according to quintile in the study

As indicated in Figure 6, five principals of primary schools participated in the research study.

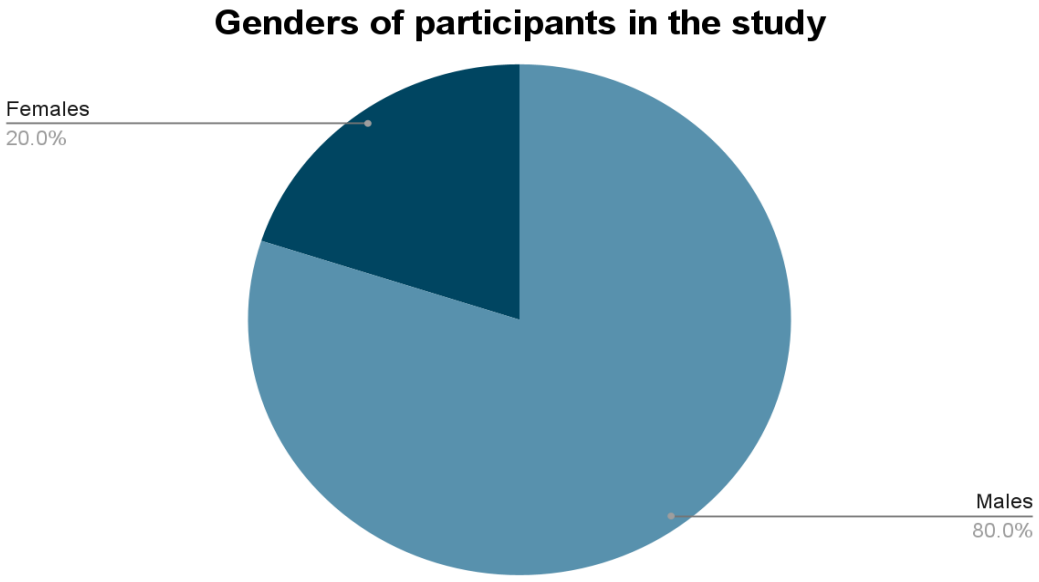


Figure 7: Genders of participants in the study

As indicated in Figure 7, one principal was a female, and four were males. The researcher took care to treat males and females as equals.

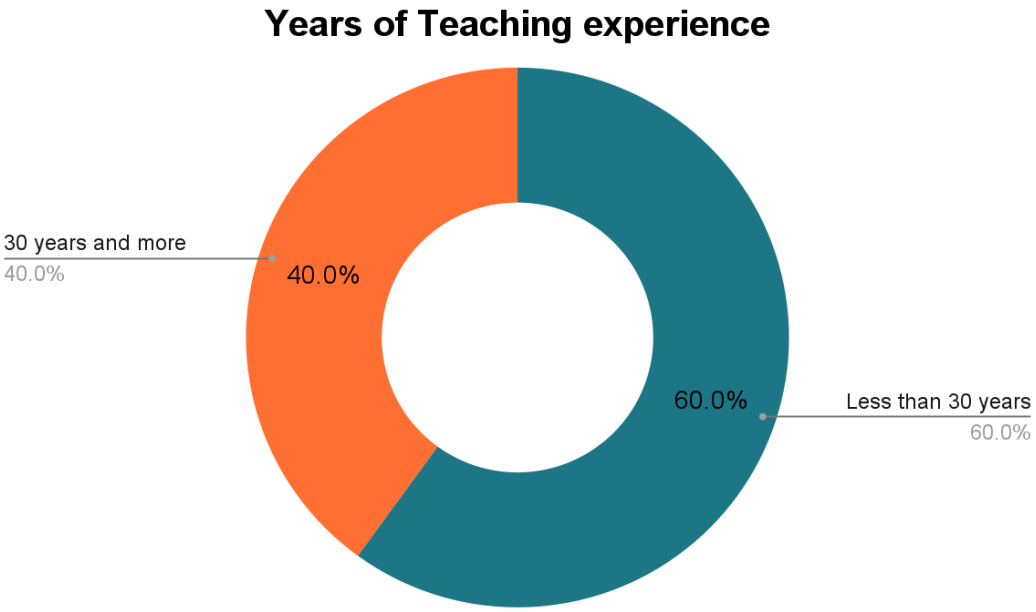


Figure 8: Years of teaching experience

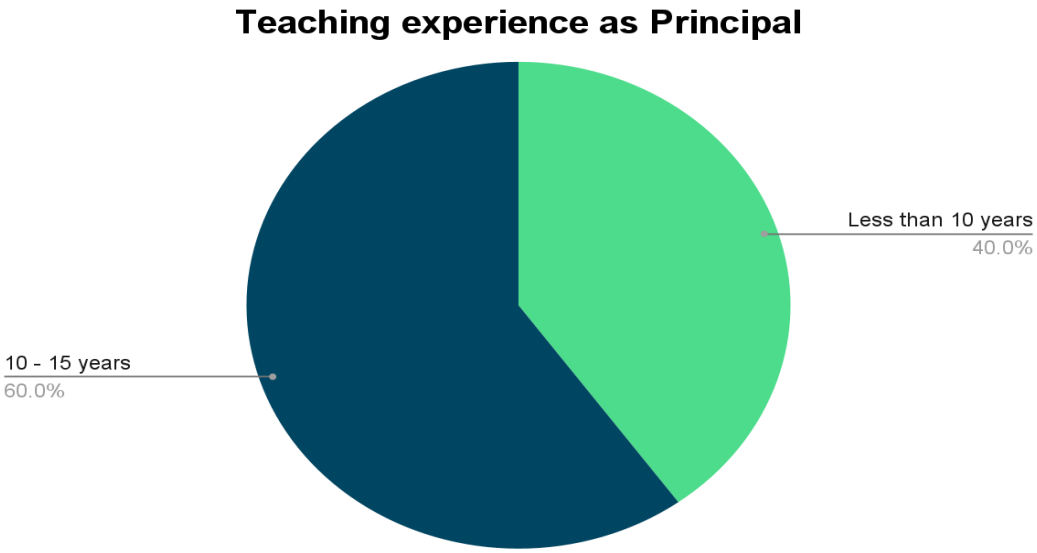


Figure 9: Years of teaching experience as principal

The graphs in Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate that all five principals involved in the study had considerable professional experience. All the participants had been teaching for more than 28 years and being principals for 9-16 years. The above-presented biographical information is only used to provide background on the professional experiences through which the participants perceived issues of multicultural leadership; none of this information is considered an explanatory variable.

Experience of the participants could be used to reflect on how changes occurred in school leadership, policy implementation and managing diverse learning communities. However, experience alone could not confirm their competence as multicultural leaders. Therefore, the study examined the actions of principals, challenges faced and evidence supporting their claims.

4.4 FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

This research was undertaken within one circuit of the uMkhanyakude district and involved five rural public primary schools. The results of the study were mainly obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted on the participating principals and were further verified using the school documents. The documents used in the research were meant to support the information obtained through the interviews and not to provide any quantitative analysis (Bowen, 2009).

The following themes and sub-themes emerged from the data.

Table 16: Themes and sub-themes

Main themes	Sub-Categories (Sub-themes)
The experiences of principals in the implementation of multicultural programmes.	● Understanding of multiculturalism in the school.● Embracing multiculturalism in the school.The school is aware of the different cultures and backgrounds that students come from.
The role of the principal in the implementation of multicultural activities in teaching and learning.	The main role is to lead in setting the direction for multicultural education within the schools. Schools are working on plans to improve teaching and leadership in a school that has students from many different cultures. The principal's role involves working with

	different groups to help support and promote multiculturalism. The role of the principal in providing tools and help to teachers when working with students from different cultural backgrounds.
Leadership approaches were applied in schools to bring future-focused change in teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms.	● Management style: How the way a school is run affects the presence and treatment of different cultures in the school. ● Parental involvement: A supportive way of managing things and how it helps in carrying out multicultural activities. • Transformational leadership style and how it helps in carrying out multicultural activities. ● It is important to create a vision that works with and supports multiculturalism in the school.
Supervision and support are provided by principals so that teachers can meet the purposes of inclusive teaching and learning.	• The principal's job is to watch over the teachers and give them helpful advice and feedback. ● The principals' need for ongoing PD. Making the classroom teaching better so that it's a good place for learning. The district provides support to principals to help them lead better and achieve good results in their schools.
Challenges to teaching and learning in a multicultural school environment.	• ● Background diversities of the learners. How different cultures

	affect the way people live together in a school setting. The diverse learning needs of learners.

4.5 DATA FROM ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

4.5.1 THEME 1: The experiences of principals in the implementation of multicultural activities in teaching and learning

All the staff members depend on the school principal for guidance, directions, assistance, and encouragement. The main person in charge should take the lead, especially when there are changes or things are not clear. Participants talked about their experiences on how they conducted multicultural programs in their teaching and learning activities. Based on the analysis of their answers, several factors encouraged the principals in this study to put in effort to include different cultures. Three big ideas emerged from the data: the training provided in multicultural programs, methods for teaching in diverse classrooms, and the reasons why multicultural programs matter.

Principal 1 shared a positive experience where students became more involved and showed greater understanding of different cultures. The principal stated, "Implementing multicultural activities has been incredibly rewarding. Students are getting more involved because they relate the lessons to their own lives, and there's more understanding and respect for different cultures across the school. This matches studies that show how Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) helps students become more involved in their learning (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Principal 1 said that "Putting on multicultural activities has been really rewarding." We havenoticed a big rise in how much students are involved with their learning because they're relating the material to their own lives. Also, there's more understanding and respect for different cultures around the school, which aligns closely with the main ideas of CRP that Ladson-Billings talked about.

Ladson-Billings (2021) says that when teachers purposefully include and value students' cultural backgrounds in their teaching, it helps students do better academically and also makes them more interested in what they're learning. This is

because the lessons become more connected to the students' real lives and experiences, making the learning process feel more personal and important to them. Furthermore, CRP is focused on helping students develop a better understanding of different cultures, which leads to greater cultural awareness and respect throughout the school, as noted by Principal 1.

Principal 2 talked about the difficulties of not having enough time and not having enough resources to carry out multicultural activities. The principal noted, one of the main difficulties is figuring out how to spend enough time and get the right support to organize and carry out real multicultural events. Teachers are already working very hard, and it's hard to focus on these new ideas when they have so many other things to handle. It shows that schools are constantly trying to handle many different needs and get enough help for teaching about different cultures. Principal 2 points out that having not enough time and not enough resources is a big problem when trying to do multicultural activities. Teachers are already very busy, which makes it harder to carry out these activities. There is a major challenge in how things are run. Ladson-Billings' (2021) important book on culturally relevant pedagogy mainly talks about the need to support students' cultural backgrounds to help them get more involved in learning and do better in school. However, it doesn't talk about the practical issues like how to share resources or manage time in schools.

The Ladson-Billings scholarship believes that culturally relevant practices are important and valuable, which means it suggests that these efforts should get the support and attention they need. So, Principal 2's comment is a reasonable concern in practice, but it doesn't directly match what Ladson-Billings said about overcoming lack of resources. Instead, it's pointing out bigger system problems that can stop the kinds of teaching methods Ladson-Billings supports from being carried out. The principal's comment shows a usual gap between the nice ideas of multicultural education and how schools actually run things. Principal 3 talked about how they worked to build good relationships with different families by organising multicultural events. The principal explained, organising multicultural events is a great way to build connections with families from different backgrounds. These events let parents share their cultures, connect with the school, and get more involved in their learners'

learning. It also follows how important it is for families to be involved in ways that respect their culture (Epstein et al., 2019).

Principal 3 had a positive experience with organising multicultural events, which helped connect with families from different backgrounds. These events allowed parents to share their cultures, build relationships with the school, and become more involved. This approach closely matches the principles of CRP, especially its focus on cultural competence, as highlighted by Ladson-Billings in 2021. Ladson-Billings mainly talks about teaching in the classroom, but the main idea of CRP is to support and keep students' cultural identities and heritage strong.This affirmation isn't just about what happens inside the classroom; it also includes how the school connects with and respects the wider community.The school makes an effort to help families share their cultural backgrounds, which shows respect for the different cultures in the school and helps use the strengths that come from this diversity. This is important for helping students and the whole school community become more culturally aware and skilled. By actively involving families, the school becomes a more friendly and real place for everyone, which helps build honest teamwork that is important for students to do well (Epstein et al., 2019).

Principal 4 talked about the difficulty of dealing with some staff or community members who are resistant or have wrong ideas about multicultural education. The principal stated, Some people, like staff or community members, are resisting because they might not see the importance of multicultural education or have wrong ideas about what it really means.To handle these concerns, we need to keep talking, share information, and work together to create a common understanding. Good communication and professional development are important to get support and handle any pushback.Principal 4's experience with some staff or community members resisting or having misunderstandings about multicultural education shows a key challenge in putting CRP into action. Ladson-Billings (2021) mainly talks about the "benefits and strategies" of CRP for students' learning, but her work also suggests that for CRP to work well, there needs to be a change in how people think and a better understanding of cultural relevance from everyone involved.

Resistance usually comes from not having a common agreement on why multicultural education is important, which is something Ladson-Billings' framework tries to build.Her scholarship pushes for a change in how education is done, which naturally leads to the continuous communication and learning that Principal 4 says is needed to deal with resistance and create a school environment that really values and understands the importance of multicultural approaches.The problem that Principal 4 mentioned is exactly the issue that needs to be solved in order to properly apply the ideas that Ladson-Billings supports.Principal 5 highlighted how teachers are improving in their understanding of different cultures and their teaching methods because they are using activities that celebrate multiculturalism. The principal remarked,Its been inspiring to watch our teachers grow in their understanding of different cultures and adjust their teaching methods to be more welcoming and inclusive. Doing these activities has made them think about their own biases, learn about different cultures, and become better teachers for all students. It indicates how important it is to focus on professional learning that helps teachers better understand and respect different cultures in their classrooms, as Gay mentioned in 2018. Principal 5 noticed that teachers are becoming more skilled at understanding different cultures and are changing their teaching methods to include a wider range of perspectives. They are doing this by adding activities that reflect various cultures. This matches closely with the main goals and big changes that CRP aims to bring, as stated by Ladson-Billings in 2021. Ladson-Billings says that teaching students from different backgrounds well means more than just helping them do well in school—it also means helping both students and teachers understand and respect different cultures.

The process that the five teachers described, which involves reflecting on personal biases, learning about different cultures, and becoming better educators for all students, is exactly the kind of professional growth that CRP is designed to support. It shows how getting involved in multicultural activities can be a strong way for teachers to learn and grow professionally, helping them change their teaching methods and really understand the importance of culture in education. This makes them better at relating to and supporting students from different backgrounds, as Gay (2018) also pointed out.In short, the principals have had different experiences when it comes to carrying out multicultural activities. They've seen good results like more involved students and better connections with families. But they've also faced difficulties such

as not having enough time, some pushback from others, and the need for continuous professional development. Their experiences show how complicated and important this work is in making schools that are fair and welcoming for everyone.

4.5.1.1 SUB-THEME 1: Understanding of multiculturalism in the school: The purpose of multiculturalism

The data reveal that principals understand multiculturalism in the classroom as encompassing a wide range of diversities, going beyond simple categorisations. Their remarks highlight the importance of recognising and addressing these diversities to create inclusive and effective learning environments.

Principal 1 emphasised that understanding multiculturalism involves acknowledging the intersectionality of identities within the classroom. The principal stated,

> *"We recognise that students don't just have one cultural identity; they have a complex mix of identities related to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language, and more. Understanding these intersections is crucial for providing equitable education."*

The finding reflects a contemporary understanding of multiculturalism as complex and intersectional (Gay, 2018).

Principal 1's profound insight into the *"complex mix of identities related to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language, and more,"* and the necessity of *"Understanding these intersections... for providing equitable education,"* deeply resonates with the foundational principles of **CRP** as conceptualised by Ladson-Billings (2021). While Ladson-Billings' seminal work may not explicitly employ the term "intersectionality" (a concept more formally introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in critical race theory), the core of CRP is inherently built upon acknowledging and responding to the multifaceted and interwoven identities of students, particularly those from historically marginalised communities. Ladson-Billings argues that effective culturally relevant teachers teach *“to and through”* students' diverse cultural backgrounds, recognising that a child's experience in the classroom is shaped by the dynamic interplay of their various social and cultural markers. Her framework, by striving for academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, implicitly requires educators to understand and address the holistic, intersectional

realities that students bring to the learning environment, thereby aligning with Principal 1's emphasis on comprehensive identity recognition for equitable education.

Principal 2 highlighted the importance of understanding the linguistic diversity present in multicultural classrooms. The principal noted,

> *"A key aspect of multiculturalism for us is recognising and valuing the different languages spoken by our students. We strive to create a classroom environment where all languages are respected and used as resources for learning."*

The finding aligns with the emphasis on linguistic diversity in creating inclusive classrooms (García et al., 2017).

The principal's emphasis on *"recognising and valuing the different languages spoken by our students"* and striving to create *"a classroom environment where all languages are respected and used as resources for learning"* profoundly aligns with the tenets of CRP as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings advocates for teaching that not only fosters academic success but also develops cultural competence and critical consciousness. Central to this is affirming students' cultural identities, which inherently includes their linguistic heritage. While her work may not exclusively focus on bilingual education, the principle of leveraging students' existing knowledge and cultural capital to enhance learning directly encompasses the value of their home languages as assets rather than deficits. By validating and utilising students' linguistic diversity, the school actively cultivates the *"cultural competence"* that is a hallmark of CRP, fostering an inclusive environment where all aspects of a student's identity are respected and contribute to the learning process (García et al., 2017).

Principal 3 focused on understanding the cultural variations in learning styles and communication patterns within a multicultural setting. The principal explained,

> *"We understand that students from different cultural backgrounds may have different ways of learning and communicating. It's important for teachers to be aware of these variations and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly to ensure all students can participate and succeed."*

The finding underscores the importance of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018).

Recognising that *"students from different cultural backgrounds may have different ways of learning and communicating,"* and the necessity for teachers to *"be aware of these variations and adapt their teaching strategies accordingly,"* is a core tenet of CRP**,** a framework extensively developed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' scholarship asserts that effective teaching for diverse learners goes beyond merely acknowledging cultural differences; it demands that educators understand and leverage these cultural variations, including learning styles and communication patterns, as assets for academic achievement. By adapting teaching strategies, educators demonstrate cultural competence and ensure that instruction is genuinely accessible and meaningful for all students, thereby aligning with Ladson-Billings' call for pedagogy that affirms cultural identity while fostering academic success (Gay, 2018).

Principal 4 emphasised understanding the socioeconomic diversity within the classroom and its impact on student experiences. The principal stated,

> *"We acknowledge that students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, which can significantly influence their access to resources and opportunities. Understanding these disparities is essential for creating a level playing field and addressing the unique needs of each student."*

The principal's acknowledgement that *"students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, which can significantly influence their access to resources and opportunities,"* and that *"understanding these disparities is essential for creating a level playing field and addressing the unique needs of each student,"* deeply resonates with the comprehensive vision of CRP as advanced by Ladson-Billings (2021). While CRP is often highlighted for its focus on race and ethnicity, its core tenets—academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness—necessarily encompass a recognition of socioeconomic disparities. Ladson-Billings argues that culturally relevant teachers help students develop a critical consciousness about societal inequities, including those related to class and access, and empower them to challenge these injustices. Therefore, understanding and addressing the impact of socioeconomic diversity is an integral part of creating the equitable and affirming learning environments that CRP seeks to establish, ensuring that education genuinely serves all students, regardless of their background.

Principal 5 highlighted understanding the diversity in family structures and values that students bring to the classroom. The principal remarked,

> *"We recognise that families come in many different forms, and they may have different values and beliefs. It's important for us to build relationships with families and understand these differences to create a culturally sensitive and supportive learning environment for all students."*

The finding reflects an understanding of the importance of family engagement in supporting diverse learners.

The principal's acknowledgement that *"students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, which can significantly influence their access to resources and opportunities,"* and that *"Understanding these disparities is essential for creating a level playing field and addressing the unique needs of each student,"* deeply resonates with the comprehensive vision of CRP as advanced by Ladson-Billings (2021). While CRP is often highlighted for its focus on race and ethnicity, its core tenets—academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness—necessarily encompass a recognition of socioeconomic disparities. Ladson-Billings argues that culturally relevant teachers help students develop a critical consciousness about societal inequities, including those related to class and access, and empower them to challenge these injustices. Therefore, understanding and addressing the impact of socioeconomic diversity is an integral part of creating the equitable and affirming learning environments that CRP seeks to establish, ensuring that education genuinely serves all students, regardless of their background.

The principals' remarks demonstrate an understanding of multiculturalism as encompassing a broad spectrum of diversities, including intersectionality, linguistic diversity, variations in learning styles, socioeconomic differences, and diverse family structures. They emphasise the importance of recognising and addressing these diversities to create truly inclusive and equitable classrooms.

The data reveal that the principals in this study possess a nuanced understanding of multiculturalism as it pertains to the classroom environment. Their remarks highlight various dimensions of this understanding, from its fundamental importance to its practical implementation.

Principal 1 articulated an understanding of multiculturalism as integral to the school's identity and its pursuit of academic excellence. The principal stated,

> *"We understand that embracing multiculturalism isn't just a policy; it's woven into the very fabric of our school culture, guiding how we interact and learn together to achieve better outcomes."*

The finding aligns with the idea that a positive school culture, as noted by Kalman (2020), is foundational for student success, and in this context, that culture is explicitly multicultural.

The principal's assertion that *"embracing multiculturalism isn't just a policy; it's woven into the very fabric of our school culture, guiding how we interact and learn together to achieve better outcomes,"* profoundly aligns with the systemic and holistic vision inherent in CRP, as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings advocates for an educational approach where culture is not an add-on but is deeply integrated into every aspect of schooling. For CRP to be truly effective, it must permeate the entire school culture, influencing how students and staff interact, how learning is facilitated, and how academic excellence is pursued. When multiculturalism is woven into the "*fabric*" and *"guides how we interact and learn together,"* it creates an environment where students' diverse cultural backgrounds are affirmed and leveraged as assets, directly contributing to the development of cultural competence and the achievement of "better outcomes" – a core tenet of Ladson-Billings' work. This signifies a shift from mere tolerance to active cultivation of a multicultural ethos, a necessary condition for CRP to flourish and enhance overall school success (Kalman, 2020).

Principal 2 emphasised the practical necessity of understanding and accommodating diverse cultures to teach and learn effectively. The principal noted,

> *"For us, multiculturalism in the classroom means recognising and valuing the diverse backgrounds of our learners. It's crucial for building a strong foundation in the early grades, as we actively involve all stakeholders to ensure every child feels included and can succeed."*

The finding reflects an understanding that effective teaching requires acknowledging and responding to the diverse needs of the student population, a point implicitly supported by the collaborative approaches advocated by Robinson et al. (2017).

The principal's emphasis on *"recognising and valuing the diverse backgrounds of our learners"* and ensuring that *"every child feels included and can succeed"* by actively involving all stakeholders, particularly for *"building a strong foundation in the early grades,"* strongly aligns with the core principles of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings posits that effective teaching for culturally diverse students is characterised by three key components: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The principal's focus on foundational success for *"every child"* directly speaks to the academic achievement aspect of CRP. Furthermore, by actively valuing diverse backgrounds and ensuring inclusion, the school fosters the development of *"cultural competence"* not only in students but also within the broader school community. This holistic approach, where all stakeholders contribute to an inclusive environment, is crucial for implementing the transformative goals of CRP and achieving equitable educational outcomes for all learners (Robinson et al., 2017).

Principal 3 demonstrated an understanding of multiculturalism as a guiding principle for school-wide programs and practices. The principal explained,

> *"Our multicultural programs are designed to create an inclusive environment where all cultures are respected. This understanding informs our planning and our expectations for staff, helping us to create a more accommodating space for our students, even amidst resource limitations."*

The finding suggests an awareness of multiculturalism as a framework for shaping the learning environment and guiding institutional actions.

The principal's explanation that *"Our multicultural programs are designed to create an inclusive environment where all cultures are respected. This understanding informs our planning and our expectations for staff, helping us to create a more accommodating space for our students, even amidst resource limitations,"* strongly aligns with the systemic implications of CRP as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings advocates for CRP not merely as a set of teaching strategies but as a comprehensive approach that cultivates academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness throughout the educational experience. For CRP to truly flourish and impact student outcomes, it requires that the entire school's *"planning and... expectations for staff"* are steeped in multicultural understanding. The principal's

description indicates that multiculturalism acts as a fundamental *"guiding principle"* for institutional actions, creating a school-wide *"accommodative space"* that actively values and integrates diverse cultures. This demonstrates the necessary shift from isolated practices to a pervasive cultural ethos that is foundational for the principles of CRP to be fully realised, even when faced with practical constraints.

Principal 4 connected the understanding of multiculturalism directly to improved student outcomes through collaborative effort. The principal stated,

> *"We see multiculturalism in the classroom as a key factor in enhancing student results. By working together – the leadership, teachers, and governing body – we can better understand and implement strategies that cater to our diverse learners, ultimately leading to greater success."*

The finding highlights the link between understanding cultural diversity and the ability to implement practical pedagogical approaches collaboratively.

The principal's statement that *"We see multiculturalism in the classroom as a key factor in enhancing student results. By working together – the leadership, teachers, and governing body – we can better understand and implement strategies that cater to our diverse learners, ultimately leading to greater success,"* directly aligns with the core tenets of CRP, as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings emphasises that CRP is not merely about making students feel good, but about fostering academic success – one of her three central propositions. She argues that when educators genuinely understand and leverage the cultural backgrounds of their diverse learners, it leads to enhanced engagement and, consequently, improved academic outcomes.

Furthermore, while Ladson-Billings' primary focus is on classroom teaching, her work implicitly and explicitly highlights the need for a collaborative school environment to sustain CRP. The notion of *"working together – the leadership, teachers, and governing body"* reflects a systemic commitment to equity and student success that is essential for culturally relevant practices to thrive. Effective implementation of CRP requires a shared vision and collective effort across all levels of the school community, ensuring that pedagogical approaches are consistently adapted to cater to diverse learners and lead to *"greater success,"* thereby reinforcing the transformative power of a unified, culturally responsive educational approach.

Principal 5 focused on the principal's role in shaping the school's understanding and commitment to multiculturalism. The principal remarked,

> *"As the instructional leader, it's my responsibility to ensure that our staff understands the importance of multiculturalism as a cornerstone of our school's progress. By setting a clear vision and leading by example, I aim to foster a school-wide understanding that embraces and celebrates diversity in our classrooms."*

The finding underscores the principal's influence in establishing and promoting a shared understanding of multiculturalism within the school, consistent with Maxwell's (2010) perspective on leadership influence.

The principal's articulation of their responsibility to *"ensure that our staff understands the importance of multiculturalism as a cornerstone of our school's progress" by "setting a clear vision and leading by example,"* thereby fostering *"a school-wide understanding that embraces and celebrates diversity,"* strongly aligns with the systemic and foundational demands of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework, particularly its emphasis on developing cultural competence across the school community, necessitates that leaders actively cultivate an environment where diversity is not merely acknowledged but deeply valued and integrated. For CRP to be successful, it cannot be a fragmented effort; it requires a unified vision and commitment that begins with the instructional leadership. The principal, through their vision and example, becomes the driving force in shaping this collective understanding and dedication, making multiculturalism an integral "cornerstone" of the entire school's progress and ethos, consistent with how effective leadership influences organisational culture and shared understanding (Maxwell, 2010).

The principals' remarks reveal a collective understanding of multiculturalism as a fundamental aspect of creating a positive, inclusive, and effective learning environment. They connect this understanding to school culture, pedagogical practices, program implementation, collaborative efforts, and the principal's leadership role in shaping the school's values and vision.

4.5.1.2 SUB-THEME 2: Understanding of multiculturalism in the classroom

The school principal talked about their understanding of the school improvement program during the interviews. The school principals clearly understood the common idea of school improvement, which involves a series of workshops aimed at solving the challenges they face.Maybe people thought that developing leadership skills meant just training and retraining teachers to meet the demands of leading a school. Maybe this makes it unclear where the line is between what educators see as professional development and what the participants think leadership development is.Reading the data in this way led to a question during the individual interview, which was meant to follow up on and explain how participants understood school principals' leadership development, based on their own experiences. In this regard, Principal 4 stated:

> *"As a principal sometimes, we felt that the changes that were being implemented were oppressive to us, but that did not deter us because I knew that the changes were within the education prescripts and the Department's directive."*

Change is needed since our education system is changing

Principal 2 said: This programme requires a lot of pre-planning. The focus has always been the improvement of the school, and all role players share a goal that unites us as a school. A lot of training is required for principals.

Principal 1 said:

> *“For me, it is about the training I need as a school leader to run the school. It includes the trainings the Department give from time to time, a whole lot of them especially the school management, financial management, the safety issues within our schools, discipline, budgeting I can go on and mention a lot that the Department had organised for us to a certain extent, but it will not be able to address the issues we face at school. I think the major thing is I (we) face different struggles as I say, and these require understanding where you are operating, the environment and the needs. You don’t manage a school theoretically, you deal with practical issues that put you on the edge, but it does not mean training isn’t useful, it is a question of which, where you are seated and how relevant the training is to your own struggles.”*

Principal 1 training, which is given by the DoE, is needed to run a school, especially for SMT. There are plenty of issues that need action to be taken.

Principal 3 said:

> *"It was important for us to receive training for all principals, running a school, especially a high school, is a huge task. Different schools have different issues; training helps address challenges, even in budget, and it assists in managing school funds. But sometimes training provided by the Department does not have directions, sometimes in principals' meetings you ask questions, maybe about SASAMS, they don't give you a clear answer."*

The above participant training assists in overcoming challenges with the school, even though sometimes some training does not help, since the DoE failed to provide them with clarity.

Principal 5 said:

> *"For me, the programme is good, the Department assists us with workshops about the programme. What I like most about these workshops is that we set a target pass percentage for school performance, the programme made us know what our weaknesses are because we analyse results each term."*

Principal 5 indicated that the training they get from the DoE helps them to understand school improvement. The importance of principals creating an organisation that supports a professional and collaborative culture is demonstrated by research on school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2019). The possibility and potential of teacher leadership continues to be a significant topic in the global discourse about educational reform and change, according to Harris and Jones (2019). Several recent publications contend that educators should assume a far more central role in decision-making and policy formation. The main idea is to "Flip the System" (Netolicky et al., 2018; Rycroft-Smith & Dutaut, 2017; Evers & Kneyber, 2015) so that teachers take the initiative, come up with the ideas, and carry out the changes in the educational system.

The extensive body of research on educational change repeatedly highlights the importance of teacher autonomy, teamwork, and leadership as key factors in bettering student outcomes (Datnow & Park, 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Hargreaves & Ainscow, 2015). There can be a long-lasting and significant impact on learner outcomes when teachers collaborate on a clear and common set of shared goals (Sharratt, 2018).

4.5.1.3 SUBTHEME 3: The awareness of diversity in multiculturalism in the school

The provided responses from five principals offer a rich, albeit indirect, window into their understanding of educational leadership and school improvement. While their discussions predominantly revolve around leadership development, training efficacy, and departmental support, a deeper analysis through the lens of *"Understanding of multiculturalism in the classroom"* reveals a significant implicit awareness of diverse contexts, alongside a striking absence of explicit terminology. This analysis will explore how the principals' expressed needs and challenges can be interpreted in relation to the complexities of a multicultural learning environment.

The most prominent feature of the principals' discourse is the lack of explicit mention of multiculturalism, diversity, or cultural differences. Their language focuses on practical, operational concerns: managing finances, ensuring safety, addressing discipline, and navigating departmental directives. Principal 1 highlights the constant need for training in areas like *"school management, financial management, [and] safety issues." At the same time,* Principal 3 emphasises the *"huge task"* of running a high school and the importance of training for "*all principals."* This direct focus on tangible tasks suggests that, for these leaders, the immediate demands of their roles overshadow a conceptual framing of their diverse student populations.

However, beneath this operational surface, a profound implicit understanding of varied school contexts which are inherently multicultural in South Africa shines through. Principal 1's assertion that "*I (we) face different struggles as I say, and these require understanding where you are operating, the environment and the needs"* is particularly telling. This statement strongly suggests a recognition that schools are not monolithic entities; their challenges are shaped by their unique environments. In a country as diverse as South Africa, *"the environment and the needs"* are almost certainly intertwined with the cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds of its student bodies. Similarly, Principal 3's observation that *"Different schools have different issues"* reinforces this acknowledgement of contextual variations, which are frequently driven by demographic differences. The *"practical issues that put you on the edge"* (Principal 1) could easily encompass challenges arising from cultural misunderstandings, diverse learning styles, or communication barriers in a multicultural classroom.

The principals' persistent demand for relevant and practical training further underscores this implicit awareness. Both Principal 1 and Principal 3 express frustration with training that feels disconnected from their reality, with Principal 3 lamenting that *"sometimes training provided by the Department does not have directions."* If training is often theoretical or fails to address "*the issues we face at school*," it implicitly suggests a deficiency in preparing principals to manage the nuanced challenges presented by diverse student populations. The types of training they list management, finance, discipline are broad. Yet, "*discipline*" in a multicultural setting, for instance, often requires culturally sensitive approaches and an understanding of varying communication styles, aspects rarely covered in generic training modules. The absence of specific requests for training in culturally responsive pedagogy, intercultural communication, or inclusive curriculum development speaks volumes, indicating either a lack of awareness of these particular needs or a perceived prioritisation of more immediate, survival-oriented skills.

4.5.2 THEME 2: The role of the principal in implementing multicultural activities in teaching and learning in the school

The data gathered underscores the pivotal role of principals in leading and facilitating the integration of multicultural activities within the teaching and learning processes in their schools. Their insights highlight various key aspects of this leadership responsibility.

Principal 1 emphasised the principal's crucial role in shaping a school-wide vision and culture that prioritises and values multiculturalism, thereby laying the groundwork for classroom implementation. The principal stated,

> "*As the instructional leader, establishing a clear vision that embraces and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of our students is paramount. This vision sets the tone for how teachers approach their practice and integrate multiculturalism into their daily lessons*."

The finding aligns with findings on the importance of a clear school vision in fostering inclusive practices (Harris & Jones, 2019).

The principal's emphasis on *"establishing a clear vision that embraces and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of our students"* and how *"This vision sets the tone for how teachers approach their practice and integrate multiculturalism into their daily*

lessons," directly aligns with the foundational principles of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings argues that CRP is not merely a set of classroom techniques but a comprehensive philosophical stance that must permeate the entire school culture. For teachers to effectively implement culturally relevant practices, the school's leadership must first articulate and foster a clear, school-wide vision that values and prioritises the diverse backgrounds of its students. This leadership in shaping the institutional ethos creates the necessary environment for cultural relevance to become embedded in daily teaching and learning, consistent with findings on the importance of a clear school vision in fostering inclusive practices (Harris & Jones, 2019).

Principal 2 highlighted the principal's responsibility in providing teachers with the necessary support, resources, and PD to implement multicultural activities effectively. The principal noted,

> *"A significant part of my role involves ensuring that our educators are well-equipped to deliver culturally responsive teaching. This includes providing access to relevant resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities focused on multicultural education, and fostering collaborative spaces for sharing effective strategies."*

The finding underscores the leadership role in providing necessary support for teachers to address diverse student needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021).

The principal's articulation that *"A significant part of my role involves ensuring that our educators are well-equipped to deliver culturally responsive teaching. This includes providing access to relevant resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities focused on multicultural education, and fostering collaborative spaces for sharing effective strategies,"* directly aligns with the practical implications of CRP, as conceptualised by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework, which strives for academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness among students, inherently demands that teachers possess the pedagogical knowledge and skills to connect with and affirm diverse learners effectively. The principal's commitment to providing *"necessary support, resources, and professional development"* is crucial for cultivating a teaching staff capable of implementing CRP effectively. By empowering educators through these mechanisms, the principal

creates the fertile ground for culturally responsive practices to flourish, thereby addressing the diverse needs of the student population as a foundational leadership responsibility (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021).

4.5.2.1 SUBTHEME 1: The principal's role in ensuring multiculturalism within the school's curriculum design

Principal 3 focused on the principal's role in ensuring that multiculturalism is embedded within the school's curriculum design and pedagogical approaches. The principal explained,

> *"It's my responsibility to work with curriculum leaders and teachers to ensure that our curriculum reflects the diverse identities and experiences of our student body. This involves promoting pedagogical approaches that are inclusive and allow for the integration of multicultural perspectives across all subject areas."*

The finding reflects the importance of leadership in shaping curriculum and instruction to be culturally relevant (Gay, 2018).

The principal's explanation that *"It's my responsibility to work with curriculum leaders and teachers to ensure that our curriculum reflects the diverse identities and experiences of our student body. This involves promoting pedagogical approaches that are inclusive and allow for the integration of multicultural perspectives across all subject areas,"* directly aligns with the fundamental tenets of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings emphasises that a truly culturally relevant education goes beyond superficial inclusion; it demands that the curriculum itself acts as a *"cultural referent,"* acknowledging and affirming students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. By ensuring the curriculum reflects diverse identities and promoting inclusive pedagogical approaches, the principal fosters the development of both academic success and cultural competence among students – two of the core pillars of CRP. This strategic embedding of multiculturalism within the very design of teaching and learning ensures that education is relevant and empowering for all learners (Gay, 2018).

Principal 4 emphasised the principal's active engagement in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of multicultural activities within classrooms, providing feedback and support for continuous improvement. The principal stated,

"An important aspect of my role is to actively monitor how multiculturalism is being enacted in our classrooms. Through classroom observations, discussions with teachers, and analysis of student outcomes, we can identify effective practices and areas where further support or adjustments are needed."

The finding aligns with the leadership responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of school-wide initiatives (Leithwood et al., 2019).

The principal's declaration that *"An important aspect of my role is to actively monitor how multiculturalism is being enacted in our classrooms. Through classroom observations, discussions with teachers, and analysis of student outcomes, we can identify effective practices and areas where further support or adjustments are needed,"* strongly aligns with the practical demands of CRP, as outlined by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework underscores the need for continuous assessment and adaptation to ensure that pedagogical practices genuinely foster academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness among students. While her work primarily focuses on the pedagogical strategies themselves, the systematic monitoring and evaluation described by the principal are essential for verifying that CRP principles are effectively translated into classroom realities. This active oversight ensures accountability and provides the necessary feedback loops for continuous improvement, which is vital for sustaining the transformative goals of multicultural education and achieving the student outcomes Ladson-Billings advocates (Leithwood et al., 2019).

4.5.2.2 SUBTHEME 2: The role of the principal in engaging with various stakeholders to support multiculturalism

Principal 5 underscored the principal's role in fostering strong home-school partnerships and engaging the wider community to support multicultural education. The principal remarked,

"*Building strong relationships with parents and community members from diverse backgrounds is crucial. My role involves actively engaging these stakeholders to enrich our understanding of different cultures and to create a supportive network for our multicultural initiatives within the school."*

The finding highlights the importance of leadership in fostering community engagement to support student learning and inclusion (Epstein et al., 2019).

Building strong relationships with *"parents and community members from diverse backgrounds"* and actively engaging these stakeholders to *"enrich our understanding of different cultures and to create a supportive network for our multicultural initiatives within the school"* resonates strongly with the holistic and asset-based approach of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework, particularly its emphasis on cultural competence, recognises that the cultural capital students bring from their homes and communities is a valuable resource for learning. For CRP to be truly effective, it necessitates that the school not only acknowledges but actively collaborates with families and the wider community to understand and leverage diverse cultural backgrounds. This active engagement creates a reciprocal relationship where the school learns from the community and, in turn, fosters a supportive network that strengthens multicultural education and student inclusion, aligning with the broader call for community engagement to support student learning (Epstein et al., 2019).

The principals' remarks collectively illustrate their central role in leading the implementation of multicultural activities in teaching and learning. This encompasses establishing a clear vision, providing essential support and resources, ensuring curriculum relevance, monitoring classroom practices, and fostering strong home-school-community partnerships.

4.5.2.3 SUBTHEME 3: The role of the principal in equipping and supporting the teachers in a multicultural context

Firstly, the principals recognise their foundational role in establishing a school-wide vision and culture that actively embraces multiculturalism. Principal 1's statement, "*As the instructional leader, establishing a clear vision that embraces and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of our students is paramount. This vision sets the tone for how teachers approach their practice and integrate multiculturalism into their daily lessons,*" perfectly encapsulates this. This aligns directly with findings on the importance of a clear school vision in fostering inclusive practices (Harris & Jones, 2019). Without a principal's deliberate effort to articulate and champion this vision,

multicultural initiatives risk becoming isolated or superficial rather than deeply embedded in the school's ethos. The principal acts as the cultural architect, designing an environment where diversity is not just tolerated, but celebrated.

Secondly, the principals keenly understand their responsibility in equipping teachers with the necessary support and PD. Principal 2 explicitly states,

> *"A significant part of my role involves ensuring that our educators are well-equipped to deliver culturally responsive teaching. This includes providing access to relevant resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities focused on multicultural education, and fostering collaborative spaces for sharing effective strategies."*

The finding finding directly supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who underscore the critical leadership role in providing robust support for teachers to address diverse student needs. Principals act as facilitators, removing barriers and providing opportunities for educators to grow their understanding and skills in culturally responsive pedagogy, thus ensuring that teachers have the toolkit required to implement multicultural activities effectively.

Thirdly, the data reveal the principal's direct influence on curriculum design and pedagogical approaches. Principal 3's insight that *"It's my responsibility to work with curriculum leaders and teachers to ensure that our curriculum reflects the diverse identities and experiences of our student body. This involves promoting pedagogical approaches that are inclusive and allow for the integration of multicultural perspectives across all subject areas,*" is crucial. This active engagement in curriculum shaping ensures that multiculturalism isn't an add-on, but an inherent part of the educational content and delivery, echoing Gay's (2018) work on the importance of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction. This signifies the principal's role in embedding multiculturalism structurally within the learning experience.

Furthermore, the principals emphasise their active engagement in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of multicultural activities. Principal 4 states,

> *"An important aspect of my role is to actively monitor how multiculturalism is being enacted in our classrooms. Through classroom observations, discussions with teachers, and analysis of student outcomes, we can identify*

effective practices and areas where further support or adjustments are needed."

The finding demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability, consistent with Leithwood et al.'s (2019) findings on leadership responsibility in monitoring school-wide initiatives' effectiveness. This active oversight ensures that multicultural initiatives translate into tangible classroom practices and positive student outcomes, moving beyond mere policy to practical application.

Finally, the principals recognise the indispensable value of fostering strong home-school partnerships and community engagement. Principal 5 remarks,

"Building strong relationships with parents and community members from diverse backgrounds is crucial. My role involves actively engaging these stakeholders to enrich our understanding of different cultures and to create a supportive network for our multicultural initiatives within the school."

The proactive approach proactive approach highlights the principal's understanding that multicultural education extends beyond the school walls, drawing on the rich cultural capital of the wider community. This aligns with Epstein et al. (2019), who emphasise the critical role of leadership in fostering community engagement to support student learning and inclusion.

4.5.3 THEME 3: LEADERSHIP APPROACHES FOR FUTURE-FOCUSED CHANGE IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS

The data reveal that principals utilise various management styles and actively seek parental involvement to cultivate and enhance multiculturalism within their classrooms and schools. Their remarks highlight the interconnectedness of these aspects in creating inclusive and enriching learning environments.

Principal 1 emphasised a collaborative management style, highlighting the importance of shared decision-making with staff and actively involving parents in shaping the multicultural ethos of the school. The principal stated,

"My management approach centres on collaboration. We work closely with teachers to develop and implement culturally responsive practices, and we actively seek input from parents representing our diverse student body to ensure our initiatives are relevant and respectful."

The finding aligns with research on collaborative leadership and its positive influence on school culture and collective responsibility (Bryk et al., 2010).

The principal's articulation of a *"collaborative management style"* centred on *"shared decision-making with staff and actively involving parents"* to shape the school's multicultural ethos directly aligns with the comprehensive and community-oriented vision of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework, while often focused on classroom teachers, implicitly and explicitly advocates for a systemic approach where the entire school community contributes to creating a culturally relevant environment. The collaborative development of "culturally responsive practices" and the active solicitation of "input from parents representing our diverse student body" exemplify the cultural competence tenet of CRP. This shared leadership approach ensures that initiatives are not only relevant and respectful but also genuinely reflect and affirm the cultural capital of the students and their families, thereby fostering academic success and critical consciousness across the school. This deep engagement of all stakeholders is crucial for sustaining the kind of inclusive school culture that is foundational to CRP (Bryk et al., 2010).

4.5.3.1 SUBTHEME 1: School management practices and their effect on multiculturalism in a school

Principal 2 highlighted a participative management style, focusing on creating opportunities for parents to actively engage in multicultural activities and contribute their cultural knowledge to the classroom. The principal noted,

> *"We strongly believe in the power of parental involvement. Our management style encourages parents to share their traditions, languages, and experiences through classroom visits, cultural events, and collaborative projects. This active participation enriches the learning environment for all students."*

The finding resonates with research on school-family partnerships, which emphasises that sustained engagement can strengthen trust, cultural understanding and support for learners (Christenson & Sheridan, 2016).

The principal's articulation of a *"participative management style"* that actively encourages parents to *"share their traditions, languages, and experiences through classroom visits, cultural events, and collaborative projects"* to enrich the learning environment profoundly aligns with the core principles of CRP, as championed by

Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework underscores the critical importance of fostering cultural competence, which necessitates not only acknowledging but actively integrating the cultural knowledge and experiences that students bring from their homes and communities into the school environment. By creating opportunities for active parental involvement and contributions of cultural capital, the school actively validates students' identities. It leverages their rich backgrounds as valuable resources for learning, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of education for all. This collaborative approach resonates with the enduring understanding of the benefits of strong home-school partnerships in promoting cultural awareness and student success (Christenson & Sheridan, 2016).

4.5.3.2 SUBTHEME 2: Supportive management style and its role in implementing multicultural activities

Principal 3 emphasised a supportive management style, ensuring that teachers have the resources and encouragement needed to implement multicultural activities and actively engage parents as partners in their children's cultural learning. The principal explained,

> *"My role as a manager is to provide the necessary support for our teachers to confidently integrate multiculturalism into their teaching. This includes providing resources, professional development, and also actively fostering communication and collaboration with parents to support their children's cultural understanding and appreciation."*

The finding aligns with the idea of leadership providing necessary support for teachers to address diverse student needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021, referenced in the previous response).

The principal's emphasis on a *"supportive management style"* that provides *"necessary support for our teachers to confidently integrate multiculturalism into their teaching,"* alongside actively *"fostering communication and collaboration with parents to support their children's cultural understanding and appreciation,"* strongly aligns with the comprehensive demands of CRP**,** as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework, aiming to develop students' academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, inherently requires a supportive school

environment where educators are equipped to implement culturally responsive practices. The provision of *"resources [and] professional development"* directly facilitates teachers' ability to achieve the cultural competence aspect of CRP. Furthermore, the active engagement with parents to enhance children's *"cultural understanding and appreciation"* directly leverages the cultural capital within the home and community, a core principle of CRP, which views families as crucial partners in a child's holistic development and learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2021).

Principal 4 focused on a proactive management style in addressing potential cultural misunderstandings and actively involving parents in fostering a culturally sensitive school environment. The principal stated,

> *"We take a proactive approach to managing cultural dynamics within our school. This involves open communication with parents, addressing any concerns promptly, and working together to build a school culture where all cultures are respected and valued. Parental involvement in these dialogues is crucial."*

The finding reflects the importance of building trust and positive relationships with families from diverse backgrounds (Turney et al., 2018).

The principal's emphasis on a *"proactive approach to managing cultural dynamics,"* involving *"open communication with parents, addressing any concerns promptly,"* and working together to *"build a school culture where all cultures are respected and valued,"* strongly aligns with the comprehensive vision of CRP, as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework, particularly its focus on fostering cultural competence, necessitates a school environment where the cultural backgrounds of students and their families are not just tolerated but actively affirmed and leveraged as strengths. This proactive management and crucial parental involvement are essential for creating a learning space where students feel culturally secure and valued. By actively engaging families in dialogue and promptly addressing concerns, the school builds the trust and positive relationships that are foundational for effective multicultural education, directly contributing to the inclusive and affirming environment that CRP champions (Turney et al., 2018).

4.5.3.3 SUBTHEME 3: Transformational management style and its role in implementing multicultural activities

Principal 5 highlighted a transformational management style aimed at inspiring both staff and parents to embrace multiculturalism as a core value and actively participate in creating a culturally rich learning environment. The principal remarked,

> *"My aim is to inspire a shared vision where multiculturalism is not just an activity but a fundamental aspect of our school's identity. This involves engaging parents as active partners in this transformation, encouraging their involvement in shaping a culturally vibrant and inclusive school community."*

The finding connects with transformational leadership, in which leaders mobilise stakeholders around a shared institutional vision and collective purpose (Burns, 1978).

The principal's aim to *"inspire a shared vision where multiculturalism is not just an activity but a fundamental aspect of our school's identity,"* and to engage parents as *"active partners in this transformation,"* profoundly aligns with the systemic and pervasive nature of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework advocates for an educational environment where cultural relevance is woven into the very fabric of the school, extending beyond individual classroom practices to inform the entire institutional culture. The principal's *"transformational management style"* directly facilitates the development of cultural competence across all stakeholders – staff, students, and parents – by creating a shared commitment to valuing and celebrating diversity. This inclusive approach, where parents are actively involved in shaping a *"culturally vibrant and inclusive school community,"* is crucial for actualising the holistic goals of CRP, which seeks to affirm students' cultural identities and leverage them as assets for academic success and critical consciousness (Burns, 1978).

With that in perspective, the principals' remarks demonstrate the application of various management styles, including collaborative, participative, supportive, proactive, and transformational, to foster multiculturalism. They also underscore the crucial role of parental involvement in enriching the learning experience, promoting cultural understanding, and building strong home-school partnerships that support inclusive education.

4.5.3.4 SUBTHEME 4: The need to establish a vision that integrates with and promotes multiculturalism within the school

Firstly, the principals recognise their foundational role in establishing a school-wide vision and culture that actively embraces multiculturalism. Principal 1's statement perfectly encapsulates this:

> *"As the instructional leader, establishing a clear vision that embraces and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of our students is paramount. This vision sets the tone for how teachers approach their practice and integrate multiculturalism into their daily lessons."*

The finding aligns with research by Harris and Jones (2019), which emphasises that a clear school vision is fundamental to cultivating inclusive practices. Without a principal's deliberate effort to articulate and champion this vision, multicultural initiatives risk becoming isolated or superficial rather than deeply embedded in the school's ethos.

Secondly, the principals keenly understand their responsibility in equipping teachers with the necessary support and PD. Principal 2 explicitly states,

> *"A significant part of my role involves ensuring that our educators are well-equipped to deliver culturally responsive teaching. This includes providing access to relevant resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities focused on multicultural education, and fostering collaborative spaces for sharing effective strategies."*

The finding finding directly supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), who underscore the critical leadership role in providing robust support for teachers to address diverse student needs. Principals act as facilitators, removing barriers and providing opportunities for educators to grow their understanding and skills in culturally responsive pedagogy.

Thirdly, the data reveal the principal's direct influence on curriculum design and pedagogical approaches. Principal 3's insight is crucial:

> *"It's my responsibility to work with curriculum leaders and teachers to ensure that our curriculum reflects the diverse identities and experiences of our student*

body. This involves promoting pedagogical approaches that are inclusive and allow for the integration of multicultural perspectives across all subject areas."

The active engagement active engagement in curriculum shaping ensures that multiculturalism isn't an add-on, but an inherent part of the educational content and delivery, echoing Gay's (2018) work on the importance of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction.

Furthermore, the principals acknowledge their role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of multicultural activities. Principal 4 states,

> "*An important aspect of my role is to actively monitor how multiculturalism is being enacted in our classrooms. Through classroom observations, discussions with teachers, and analysis of student outcomes, we can identify effective practices and areas where further support or adjustments are needed*."

The evidence demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability, consistent with Leithwood et al.'s (2019) findings on leadership responsibility in monitoring school-wide initiatives' effectiveness. This active oversight ensures that initiatives translate into tangible classroom practices and positive student outcomes.

Finally, the principals recognise the indispensable value of fostering strong home-school partnerships and community engagement. Principal 5 remarks:

> *"Building strong relationships with parents and community members from diverse backgrounds is crucial. My role involves actively engaging these stakeholders to enrich our understanding of different cultures and to create a supportive network for our multicultural initiatives within the school."*

The proactive approach proactive approach highlights the principal's understanding that multicultural education extends beyond the school walls, drawing on the rich cultural capital of the wider community. This aligns with Epstein et al. (2019), who emphasise the critical role of leadership in fostering community engagement to support student learning and inclusion.

In summation, the principals' responses collectively illustrate a comprehensive understanding of their multifaceted role in implementing multicultural activities. From

establishing an overarching vision and providing essential resources to actively shaping curriculum, monitoring progress, and engaging the community, these leaders demonstrate that their influence is deeply embedded in every aspect of multicultural education. Their insights confirm that effective principal leadership is not merely supportive but proactively drives the successful integration of multiculturalism into the very fabric of teaching and learning within their schools.

4.5.4 THEME 4: Supervision and support provided by principals to enable inclusive multicultural teaching and learning

The data indicate that principals play a crucial role in supervising and supporting teachers to implement inclusive multicultural teaching and learning practices effectively. Their approaches aim to enhance classroom instruction for diverse learners and are often coupled with support mechanisms to empower principals in their leadership roles.

Principal 1 emphasised regular classroom observations and constructive feedback as key supervisory tools to improve inclusive multicultural instruction. The principal stated,

> *"Through consistent classroom observations, focused specifically on inclusive practices and cultural responsiveness, we provide teachers with targeted feedback and identify areas for growth. This ongoing dialogue and support are essential for refining their instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs in our multicultural classrooms."*

The finding aligns with research on the importance of observation and feedback in enhancing teaching quality and promoting inclusive practices (Kraft et al., 2021).

Principal 2 highlighted the provision of PD and resources as critical support mechanisms for teachers to implement multicultural teaching effectively. The principal noted,

> *"We invest significantly in providing teachers with ongoing professional development focused on culturally responsive pedagogy, anti-bias education, and strategies for inclusive teaching. Access to relevant resources, including*

culturally diverse materials and collaborative planning time, is also crucial in supporting their efforts."

The finding underscores the importance of providing teachers with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively teach diverse learners (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Principal 3 focused on fostering collaboration and peer support among teachers as a key strategy facilitated by the principal's leadership. The principal explained,

> *"We actively create opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share best practices in inclusive multicultural teaching, and learn from each other's experiences. This peer support network, facilitated through regular meetings and shared planning time, is invaluable in building collective capacity and improving classroom instruction."*

The finding reflects the benefits of teacher collaboration in developing and implementing effective inclusive practices (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Principal 4 emphasised the principal's role in advocating for and securing resources at a systemic level to support inclusive multicultural education. The principal stated,

> *"A significant part of my leadership involves advocating for the necessary resources, both within the school and at district levels, to support our inclusive multicultural initiatives. This includes funding for diverse learning materials, specialised support staff, and professional learning opportunities. Securing these resources is vital for enabling teachers to effectively meet the needs of all learners."*

The finding aligns with the leadership responsibility of advocating for equitable resource allocation to support diverse student populations (Theoharis, 2007).

Principal 5 highlighted the importance of ongoing principal PD and leadership coaching focused on leading multicultural schools effectively. The principal remarked,

> *"To effectively support our teachers and drive quality results in our multicultural school, it's essential that principals also have access to ongoing professional development and leadership coaching focused on equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive leadership. This support equips us with the knowledge and skills to effectively guide and supervise our staff."*

The finding underscores the need for continuous learning and support for principals in leading diverse school communities (Khalifa et al., 2016)

The collective insights from the principals regarding their approaches to supervision and support for multicultural teaching and learning consistently align with the systemic and pedagogical demands of CRP, as articulated by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings posits that CRP aims to foster academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness among students. The various strategies highlighted by the principals—from direct instructional support to systemic advocacy and personal professional growth—are all instrumental in creating the conditions necessary for CRP to flourish.

The practice of conducting *"consistent classroom observations, focused specifically on inclusive practices and cultural responsiveness,"* coupled with providing *"targeted feedback"* to teachers, speaks to the practical application of CRP within daily instruction. Ladson-Billings' work, while not detailing specific supervisory tools, inherently calls for teaching that is continually refined to meet the diverse learning needs and cultural backgrounds of students. Such direct oversight ensures that teachers are indeed developing and applying culturally relevant instructional strategies.

Furthermore, the emphasis on *"investing significantly in providing teachers with ongoing professional development focused on culturally responsive pedagogy, anti-bias education, and strategies for inclusive teaching,"* along with *"Access to relevant resources, including culturally diverse materials and collaborative planning time,"* directly supports the development of cultural competence in educators, which is a cornerstone of Ladson-Billings framework. For teachers to effectively leverage students' cultural backgrounds as assets, they require the knowledge and tools that such PD and resources provide (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Creating *"opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share best practices in inclusive multicultural teaching, and learn from each other's experiences"* highlights the importance of a collective approach to implementing CRP. Ladson-Billings' work, while focusing on individual teacher excellence, implicitly supports the notion that a shared professional learning environment strengthens the capacity to deliver culturally relevant instruction. Collaboration among educators fosters the collective cultural

competence necessary to navigate and leverage the complexities of a multicultural classroom (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Moreover, the leadership responsibility of *"advocating for the necessary resources, both within the school and at district levels, to support our inclusive multicultural initiatives"* underscores the systemic support required for CRP to thrive. Ladson-Billings' framework, by seeking transformative educational outcomes, implicitly calls for equitable resource allocation to ensure all students have access to culturally affirming and rigorous learning opportunities. This advocacy ensures that the aspirational goals of multicultural education are underpinned by practical, material support.

Finally, the recognition that *"principals also have access to ongoing professional development and leadership coaching focused on equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive leadership"* points to the understanding that leaders themselves must embody and continuously develop their own cultural competence and critical consciousness to guide staff in CRP implementation effectively. Ladson-Billings' vision for culturally relevant education extends to the entire school ecosystem, beginning with informed and culturally astute leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016).

In essence, the principals' multifaceted approaches to supervision and support collectively serve to cultivate the conditions necessary for the successful implementation of CRP. Their practical strategies aim to empower teachers, foster collaboration, secure resources, and ensure informed leadership, all of which are vital for realising Ladson-Billings vision of academic excellence, cultural competence, and critical consciousness in multicultural school settings.

The evidence illustrates a multifaceted approach to supervision and support aimed at empowering teachers to excel in inclusive multicultural teaching and learning. This includes providing targeted feedback, relevant PD and resources, fostering collaboration, advocating for necessary resources, and ensuring principals themselves are well-supported in their leadership roles to drive quality outcomes in diverse school settings.

4.5.4.1 SUB-THEME 1: The principal's role in supervising and providing supportive feedback to teachers

Firstly, principals are identified as pivotal in providing direct instructional supervision through targeted observation and feedback. Principal 1's emphasis on "*consistent classroom observations, focused specifically on inclusive practices and cultural responsiveness*," underscores a deliberate effort to refine teaching methods. This hands-on approach, providing *"targeted feedback and identifying areas for growth,"* aligns with research by Kraft et al. (2021), which highlights the efficacy of observation and feedback in enhancing teaching quality. This systematic engagement ensures that multicultural practices are not just theoretical concepts but are actively integrated and refined in daily classroom interactions.

Secondly, the data stresses the principal's critical function in equipping teachers with essential PD and resources. Principal 2 states,

> *"We invest significantly in providing teachers with ongoing professional development focused on culturally responsive pedagogy, anti-bias education, and strategies for inclusive teaching."*

The commitment commitment extends to providing *"access to relevant resources, including culturally diverse materials and collaborative planning time."* This active provision of knowledge and tools is vital, as supported by Villegas and Lucas (2002), who emphasise the importance of preparing teachers to educate diverse learners effectively. Principals, therefore, serve as crucial conduits for ups-killing their staff to meet the demands of multicultural classrooms.

Thirdly, principals play a significant role in fostering a culture of collaboration and peer support among teachers. Principal 3 highlights the deliberate creation of *"opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share best practices in inclusive multicultural teaching, and learn from each other's experiences."* This "*peer support network*" is invaluable for "*building collective capacity*," echoing Hargreaves and O'Connor's (2018) research on the benefits of teacher collaboration for developing effective inclusive practices. By facilitating these professional learning communities, principals enable a shared understanding and collective advancement in multicultural pedagogical approaches.

Fourthly, the findings demonstrate the principal's essential role in advocating for and securing systemic resources. Principal 4 articulates that.

"*A significant part of my leadership involves advocating for the necessary resources, both within the school and at district levels, to support our inclusive multicultural initiatives*."

The support described encompasses securing "*funding for diverse learning materials, specialised support staff, and professional learning opportunities,*" aligning with Theoharis's (2007) work on leadership responsibility in advocating for equitable resource allocation, underscoring that principals are not merely managers of existing resources, but active champions for the financial and structural support vital for truly inclusive education.

4.5.4.2 SUB-THEME 2: The principals' need for ongoing professional development (PD)

Finally, a crucial insight from the research is the recognition of the principals' own need for ongoing PD and leadership coaching. Principal 5 remarks,

> *"To effectively support our teachers and drive quality results in our multicultural school, it's essential that principals also have access to ongoing professional development and leadership coaching focused on equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive leadership."*

The self-aware perspective self-aware perspective, supported by Khalifa et al. (2016), emphasises that principals themselves require continuous learning to guide their staff and lead diverse school communities effectively, highlighting a holistic view of professional growth, acknowledging that effective top-down support is contingent on robust bottom-up development for the leaders themselves.

In conclusion, the principals in this study articulate a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their responsibilities in supervising and supporting inclusive multicultural teaching and learning. Their strategies, ranging from direct instructional feedback and PD provision to fostering collaboration, advocating for resources, and engaging in their own continuous learning, collectively underscore their pivotal role. This multi-faceted approach transforms the principal from an administrative figure into an active architect and sustained champion of truly inclusive and culturally responsive educational environments.

4.5.5 THEME 5: Challenges to teaching and learning in a multicultural school

The data reveals that principals in the uMkhanyakude district face significant challenges in creating effective teaching and learning environments within their multicultural schools. However, their remarks also highlight innovative solutions they have implemented to overcome these obstacles.

Principal 1 emphasised the challenge of addressing diverse learning needs and the solution of implementing differentiated instruction and targeted interventions. The principal stated,

> *"We face the challenge of students with vastly different academic backgrounds and learning styles. To address this, we've invested in training teachers in differentiated instruction, providing small-group interventions for struggling learners, and using data to track student progress and adjust our strategies accordingly."*

The finding aligns with research on effective differentiation strategies for diverse classrooms (Tomlinson, 2014) and the use of data-driven instruction (Hamilton et al., 2009).

Principal 2 highlighted the challenge of overcoming language barriers and the solution of implementing translanguaging pedagogies and providing multilingual support. The principal noted,

> *"Language diversity is a key challenge in our schools. To overcome this, we've adopted translanguaging approaches that value and utilise students' home languages in the classroom. We also provide additional support for English language learners through bilingual aides and sheltered instruction."*

The finding reflects the growing body of research on the benefits of translanguaging (García et al., 2017) and effective strategies for supporting multilingual learners (Cummins, 2021).

Principal 3 focused on the challenge of addressing cultural misunderstandings and the solution of implementing restorative justice practices and culturally responsive conflict resolution. The principal explained,

"Cultural differences can sometimes lead to conflict. We've found restorative justice to be effective in addressing these issues. We also train staff in culturally responsive conflict resolution techniques to help students understand and respect each other's perspectives."

The finding aligns with the emphasis on restorative justice in promoting positive school climates and addressing cultural conflict (Anyon et al., 2018).

Principal 4 emphasised the challenge of countering implicit bias and the solution of providing ongoing PD on cultural competence and equity. The principal stated,

"We recognise that implicit bias can affect our interactions with students and families. We've made cultural competence training a priority for all staff, with ongoing professional development focused on self-reflection, understanding different cultural perspectives, and developing culturally responsive teaching practices."

The finding reflects the importance of sustained PD in addressing bias and promoting equitable practices (Castro et al., 2018).

The collective responses from principals regarding the challenges faced in multicultural schools and their implemented solutions powerfully resonate with the foundational tenets of CRP, as championed by Ladson-Billings (2021). Ladson-Billings' framework emphasises three crucial goals: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The principals' insights demonstrate how their practical efforts directly contribute to achieving these CRP outcomes.

4.5.5.1 SUBTHEME 1: Background diversities of the learners

The challenge of addressing "*vastly different academic backgrounds and learning styles,"* and the solution of *"investing in training teachers in differentiated instruction, providing small-group interventions for struggling learners, and using data to track student progress,"* directly serve the CRP goal of academic success. Ladson-Billings argues that culturally relevant teachers hold high expectations for all students and employ varied pedagogical approaches to ensure intellectual growth, which implicitly includes differentiated strategies to meet diverse needs (Tomlinson, 2014; Hamilton et al., 2009).

Addressing *"language diversity"* through *"translanguaging approaches that value and utilise students' home languages"* and providing *"additional support for English language learners"* speaks directly to the development of cultural competence. Ladson-Billings' CRP emphasises affirming and sustaining students' cultural identities, which inherently includes their linguistic heritage. By valuing home languages as resources, schools foster a culturally affirming environment crucial for students' sense of belonging and academic engagement (Cummins, 2021; García et al., 2017).

4.5.5.2 SUBTHEME 2: Cultural differences and their effect on multiculturalism in the school

The focus on resolving *"Cultural differences"* that *"can sometimes lead to conflict"* by implementing *"restorative justice practices and culturally responsive conflict resolution techniques"* aligns with both cultural competence and the beginnings of critical consciousness. Ladson-Billings' work implicitly recognises that managing cultural dynamics within a diverse student body is essential. These practices move beyond punitive measures to build mutual understanding and respect, allowing students to navigate and learn from cultural differences constructively, fostering a more just school climate (Anyon et al., 2018).

Finally, the challenge of *"countering implicit bias" through "cultural competence training... focused on self-reflection, understanding different cultural perspectives, and developing culturally responsive teaching practices"* is central to the very ethos of CRP. Ladson-Billings highlights that culturally relevant teaching requires educators to deeply understand themselves and the societal structures that impact students. This ongoing PD is vital for teachers to develop the cultural competence and nascent critical consciousness necessary to effectively serve all students equitably and challenge underlying inequities within the system (Castro et al., 2018).

In essence, the principals identified challenges and their comprehensive solutions collectively represent a practical commitment to the principles of CRP, aiming to ensure academic achievement, foster cultural affirmation, and promote a critically aware and equitable learning environment for all students in multicultural settings.

Principal 5 highlighted the challenge of engaging parents from diverse backgrounds and the solution of implementing culturally sensitive communication strategies and creating welcoming school environments. The principal remarked,

> "*Building strong relationships with all families is crucial, but it can be challenging. We've worked to make our communication more accessible by providing information in multiple languages, offering flexible meeting times, and creating a welcoming school environment where all families feel valued and respected*."

The finding aligns with research on culturally responsive family engagement (Ishimaru et al., 2016).

The principals in the uMkhanyakude district are actively addressing the challenges of multicultural education by implementing a range of solutions. These include differentiated instruction, translanguaging pedagogies, restorative justice, cultural competence training, and culturally sensitive family engagement strategies. Their efforts demonstrate a commitment to creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students.

4.5.5.3 SUBTHEME 3: The diverse learning needs of learners

One significant challenge identified is the management of diverse learning needs and academic backgrounds. Principal 1 articulates the struggle with students exhibiting "*vastly different academic backgrounds and learning styles*." This echoes a universal concern in diverse classrooms, where a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is ineffective. The principals' solution, however, is commendable: "*investing in training teachers in differentiated instruction, providing small-group interventions for struggling learners, and using data to track student progress*." This proactive stance aligns perfectly with Tomlinson's (2014) research on differentiation and Hamilton et al.'s (2009) emphasis on data-driven instruction, proving that tailoring instruction to individual needs is a cornerstone of multicultural education.

A pervasive challenge in linguistically diverse settings, particularly in a region like uMkhanyakude, is overcoming language barriers. Principal 2 directly addresses this, stating that "*Language diversity is a key challenge in our schools*." Their innovative response involves embracing "*translanguaging approaches that value and utilise*

students' home languages in the classroom," alongside providing "*additional support for English language learners through bilingual aides and sheltered instruction*." This approach is deeply rooted in contemporary research by Cummins (2021) and García et al. (2017), recognising the cognitive and social benefits of leveraging students' linguistic repertoires rather than solely focusing on English acquisition.

Furthermore, the principals grapple with the nuanced issue of cultural misunderstandings and potential conflicts. Principal 3 acknowledges that "*Cultural differences can sometimes lead to conflict.*" Their solution lies in the adoption of *"restorative justice"* practices and training staff in "*culturally responsive conflict resolution techniques.*" This reflects a progressive shift from punitive discipline to approaches that foster understanding, empathy, and reconciliation, consistent with Anyon et al.'s (2018) findings on restorative justice's role in promoting positive school climates, showing an understanding that conflict resolution in a multicultural setting requires a nuanced approach that respects diverse cultural norms.

A more subtle, yet equally critical, challenge highlighted is the presence of implicit bias among staff. Principal 4 astutely recognises that "*implicit bias can affect our interactions with students and families*." The proactive solution involves making "*cultural competence training a priority for all staff, with ongoing professional development focused on self-reflection, understanding different cultural perspectives, and developing culturally responsive teaching practices*." This commitment to sustained PD aligns with Castro et al.'s (2018) work on addressing bias and promoting equitable practices, demonstrating an understanding that true inclusivity requires continuous personal and professional growth.

Finally, the principals address the crucial challenge of engaging parents from diverse backgrounds. Principal 5 notes the difficulty in "*Building strong relationships with all families.*" Their creative solutions include "*providing information in multiple languages, offering flexible meeting times, and creating a welcoming school environment where all families feel valued and respected.*" This mirrors research on culturally responsive family engagement (Ishimaru et al., 2016), underscoring the understanding that successful multicultural education extends beyond the classroom walls and requires deliberate efforts to bridge cultural and linguistic divides with the broader community.

Principals in the uMkhanyakude district demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the challenges inherent in leading multicultural schools. Crucially, their responses go beyond mere identification of problems, offering concrete, research-aligned solutions. Their implementation of differentiated instruction, translanguaging pedagogies, restorative justice, cultural competence training, and culturally sensitive family engagement strategies reflects a dynamic and adaptive leadership committed to creating genuinely inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students, truly transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation.

4.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM DOCUMENTS

Document analysis provided evidence from the institution that would support, limit or contradict the narratives created via interviewing. According to Bowen (2009), documents are good qualitative sources since they create a lasting record of policies, decisions and practices in an organisation. In this study, document analysis was based on documents that had something to do with the research questions. The documents analyzed included School Improvement Plans, minutes of SGBs and SMTs, professional development documents, financial resources documents, academic achievements documents, discipline documents and district monitoring reports. Extracts from these documents were coded together with the interview data in relation to emerging themes. The analysis was guided by the CRP pillars of academic success, cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2021) while stakeholder documents were interpreted in light of Epstein’s overlapping spheres of influence.

4.6.1 A description of documents analysed

The documents analysed include the following:

4.6.1.1 The School Improvement Plan (SIP)

These are the plans produced by the school regarding school improvement. They were specifically analysed for the presence of decolonisation goals (Finding 13) and multilingual policy frameworks (Finding 14) to confirm the principal's vision.

4.6.1.2 Minutes

These are the decisions made at particular meetings. They were used to describe how the decisions that were made in the schools/ were affecting practice. This includes SMT meeting minutes and Learner Representative Council (LRC) minutes to verify delegation of tasks and learner empowerment initiatives.

4.6.1.3 Examination results of the students

These are students' performance results in the national, provincial and school-level examinations and were used to describe the performance of the schools and the students. These results were specifically disaggregated by language or cultural group to verify the impact of Instructional Oversight on Academic Success (Finding 1).

4.6.1.4 Reports

These are the performance reports of the school to the school community. This includes financial reports and budget allocations to confirm the level of Resource and PD Provision and Systemic Advocacy for Equity (Finding 4).

4.6.1.5 SMT terms of reference/delegation instruments

Documents detailing the formal, administrative delegation of duties from the Principal to the Deputy Principals and Heads of Department (HODs) are used to verify the division of instructional vs. managerial tasks within the SMT.

4.6.1.6 Professional Development (PD) schedules and agendas

Records used to confirm the content and frequency of training, looking for evidence of anti-bias training, translanguaging workshops, and peer-led cultural coaching (Alternative Strategies).

4.6.1.7 School Governing Body (SGB) minutes

Used to verify parental engagement levels, budget allocation for alternative resource generation, and the existence and power structure of Parental Cultural Advisory Boards (Co-Educatorship Model).

4.6.2 Document analysis and representation

For this study, documents serve to verify the existence, application, and resourcing of **CRP** initiatives as reported by principals in the uMkhanyakude District.

4.6.2.1 School Improvement Plans (SIPs)

The SIPs were analysed to determine the formal strategic direction and awareness of diversity in multiculturalism (main theme 1) and the principal's role in strategic planning (main theme 2).

Questions answered by SIP analysis:

- To what extent are goals related to decolonisation and multilingualism formally integrated into the school's three-to-five-year plan?
- Do the SIPs reflect the Principal's stated understanding and awareness of diversities (e.g., in resource allocation and curriculum)?

SIPs revealed a significant gap between philosophical intent and operational reality. While plans often included boilerplate language affirming constitutional values of diversity, they failed to operationalise these values with measurable targets specific to CRP.

Principal 4 noted the pressure from above:

> *"Our SIP is mainly focused on ticking the boxes for the district on numeracy and literacy scores. When we try to add specific goals about teaching African philosophy or decolonising the Natural Sciences curriculum, we are told, 'Keep it simple.'"*

The documents lacked clear mandates for decolonisation targets (Finding 13), confirming that the school's strategic planning prioritised general academic

compliance over specific multicultural outcomes. This meant the understanding of multiculturalism remained largely at the declarative level, not the procedural level.

4.6.2.2 Meeting Minutes (SMT, Staff, LRC, SGB)

Minutes were analysed to confirm the actual execution of policies, the delegation of roles within the SMT, the application of leadership approaches, and the level of stakeholder engagement (main themes 2 & 3).

Questions answered by minutes analysis:

- Does the SMT delegate instructional duties related to CRP, or focus predominantly on administration (role of principal, main theme 2)?
- Do minutes reflect a collaborative/participative management style (leadership approaches, main theme 3)?
- Is there documentary evidence of learner empowerment (e.g., through an LRC cultural committee)?

SMT Minutes often verified the delegation of tasks, but primarily managerial ones (e.g., facility repair, timetable clashes), confirming the weakness in SMT Instructional Dissemination. HOD meeting minutes frequently lacked dedicated discussion time on complex pedagogy like translanguaging (Finding 14), reinforcing the challenge to the principal's instructional role.

Principal 3 commented on the difficulty of maintaining focus:

> *"The greatest challenge is time. When we look at the SMT minutes, two-thirds of our time is spent on administrative firefighting. The teaching and learning part, the actual multicultural strategy, gets pushed to the end, even though we know it's the most important."*

SGB Minutes confirmed that Parental Involvement struggles to achieve the co-educatorship model. Discussions were primarily financial, lacking documented motions to establish a Cultural Advisory Board with formal curriculum review power. However, LRC minutes were vital for confirming school-learner empowerment (Alternative Strategy). These minutes showed learners in some schools successfully lobbying the SMT to introduce multilingual notices and culturally appropriate uniform options, demonstrating the power of grassroots agency.

4.6.2.3 Financial reports and budget allocation documents

These documents were analysed to verify the level of resource and PD provision (main theme 2) and to corroborate the challenge of insufficient funding (Main Theme 5).

Questions answered by financial analysis:

- Is the budget allocation sufficient for the goals articulated in the SIP, specifically for multicultural resources and specialised PD?
- Is there evidence of systemic advocacy for equity through alternative strategies (e.g., dedicated funding for local resource generation)?

Financial reports universally revealed a critical insufficiency of cash and resources, which was the foundational challenge to effective implementation. There was an absence of dedicated budget lines for specialised CRP needs. Funds for PD were generic, not allocated for anti-bias training or for compensating internal peer coaches (alternative strategy).

Principal 1 highlighted the structural disadvantage:

> *"The district sends the policy, but they don't send the money. Our financial reports show we must rely on tuckshop funds to pay a part-time translator for parent meetings. That is the reality of managing multiculturalism in quintile 1."*

Crucially, the analysis of these reports provided evidence of alternative strategies. Several schools showed expenditures derived from micro-grants or local fundraising initiatives, which were explicitly directed toward acquiring multilingual primary readers or securing specialised expertise (e.g., a university student to conduct a Resource Equity Audit), proving that the SMT was forced to bypass the state system to secure resources.

4.6.3 Academic achievement data and discipline logs

The records were analysed to measure the outcomes of the SIP and leadership practices, focusing on diverse learning needs and cultural differences (main theme 5).

Questions answered by data analysis:

- Is there a performance gap between distinct language or cultural groups (background diversities of learners)?

- Do the discipline logs show evidence of implicit bias (e.g., disproportionate suspension rates across groups)?

Academic achievement data consistently revealed diverging performance (unsatisfactory academic performance) between learners from different language backgrounds, confirming that the school was failing to meet the diverse learning needs of learners (main theme 5). This directly challenges the success of the principal's role in equipping and supporting the teachers (finding 7).

Discipline Logs provided objective evidence of the effect of cultural differences (finding 8). Logs showed an evident disproportionality in disciplinary referrals for minor infractions against specific cultural or language groups. This pattern was crucial for substantiating the principals' claims regarding the need to shift from a punitive to a more supportive management style to address implicit bias.

Principal 2 detailed their discovery:

> *"When we disaggregated the discipline data, we were shocked. Learners from the Swazi-speaking community were being referred to my office at twice the rate of the others. The logs showed it wasn't behaviour; it was a cultural difference in communication styles. The data forced us to adopt Restorative Justice."*

4.6.4 ZEO/DEO monitoring reports and PD agendas

These documents assessed the support given by the district (main theme 4) and the effectiveness of principals' Supervision and Support role (main theme 4).

Questions answered by external document analysis:

- Is the district's support focused on compliance or capacity building (Supervision and Support, main theme 4)?
- Does the district provide resources to meet the principals' need for ongoing PD in multicultural leadership?

ZEO/DEO monitoring reports confirmed that the nature of the support was predominantly administrative, focusing on compliance and facility management rather than improving classroom instruction for multilingual settings. Specific

recommendations for managing the decolonisation agenda or supporting translanguaging were notably absent.

Principal 1 summarised the deficit:

> *"The ZEO reports are useful for compliance, but they offer no technical support for multicultural challenges. They check if the books are ordered, but not if the teachers know how to use those books to affirm a child's Zulu culture. The support stops at the administration desk."*

The PD Agendas offered by the district likewise showed generic topics, confirming that the principals' need for ongoing PD in specialised areas like Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) and systemic advocacy was left unaddressed, requiring the leaders to rely on their own informal self-reflective leadership development (Finding 4).

4.7 CONCLUSION

The researcher presented and examined data on principals' experiences of school improvement in chapter 3. The analysis was based on the SIP's outcome of school effectiveness. The focus was on how the case study schools used CRP to address the needs of multicultural learners. This analysis was based on the data at hand, and the literature and the researcher's views on the findings.

This chapter, therefore, provided evidence on how principals' multicultural education was made up of five inter-related elements. First, principals integrated and promoted multicultural practices within the school. Second, principals, as part of the SMT, carried out instructional and leadership practices, and reviewed or developed school policies to address different learners' needs. Third, principals used a variety of transformational and participative techniques to bring about changes in practices within the school. Fourth, principals offered guidance and support to teachers to adopt inclusive practices. Lastly, principals were challenged to advocate for the changes that would help address different learners' needs, given the available limited resources.

In view of the above constraints, principals utilized locally available professional development, and leveraged community and higher education resources. They utilized their own initiative to mobilize resources and empower learners through restorative practices and other similar strategies. CRP supported the interpretation of academic success and the integration of culture and critical thinking. Epstein supported the interpretation of the schools' engagement with families and the community.

This chapter provided an analysis of the findings from the five participating primary schools in the uMkhanyakude District as well as the literature and documentation related to the development and implementation of multicultural programs. The analysis was structured in the three parts of CRP. Academic Success included both the academic and social aspects of the schooling.

4.7.1 Principal's role in leading multicultural programs (SMT and implementation)

The study found that the principal's role in the uMkhanyakude District has evolved from a lone leader to a strategic conductor of the SMT.

The empirical findings reveal that the role of primary school principals in the uMkhanyakude district has shifted significantly from that of an isolated administrative manager to a strategic conductor of the School Management Team (SMT). While participating school heads expressed a philosophical commitment to curriculum decolonisation and multilingual education, document analysis of SMT meeting minutes indicated that instructional oversight and pedagogical coaching were frequently diluted by an overwhelming focus on daily operational and managerial tasks, such as facility repairs, infrastructural maintenance, and administrative compliance reporting. These empirical observations corroborate the scholarly insights of Khalifa et al. (2016), who highlight the pervasive tension between administrative burdens and the capacity of school leaders to provide sustained, culturally responsive instructional leadership.

Furthermore, the data demonstrated that the absence of specialized pre-service and in-service training in educational management among several school heads hindered their ability to translate inclusive visions into systemic SMT instructional dissemination. This capacity gap directly impacted the fidelity with which complex pedagogical

practices such as translanguaging and differentiated instruction were implemented in multi-dialectal classrooms. Nevertheless, effective implementation was strongly evident in schools where principals adopted a transformational and participative leadership style. By actively involving departmental heads, senior educators, and School Governing Body (SGB) members in institutional policy formulation, these leaders cultivated a shared sense of ownership, facilitating more cohesive responses to classroom diversity.

4.7.2 Challenges and resource insufficiency

The challenges have been found to be structural and prevent the attainment of CRP goals, including academic success and cultural competency.

Structural challenges have hampered the realization of CRP in the rural uMkhanyakude primary schools, especially regarding the adoption of the principles of CRP like academic success and cultural competency. The main problem that the participating schools face is financial problems and budget issues. In the budgets of the schools, there has been no provision of funds by the government towards the production of culturally responsive learning material including multilingual reading books and anti-bias workshops. This led to the need for principals to use funds from the discretionary budget to acquire culturally responsive learning materials.

The already existing financial limitation was further complicated by a lack of technical support from the circuit and district officials (DEOs and ZEOs). It was noted that most of the supervisory visits and reports from the district officials were more compliance-oriented and less concerned about the pedagogic input required for decolonizing the curriculum and complex multilingual policy implementation. Due to the above-mentioned structural and instructional challenges, the academic performance records indicated a consistent gap between the academic performance of learners who spoke languages that were not dominant in the community.

4.7.3 Strategies for critical consciousness and empowerment

The study highlighted the proactive, locally driven strategies employed by SMTs to overcome systemic weaknesses and empower stakeholders.

To mitigate systemic weaknesses and external support deficits, school principals and SMTs implemented innovative, locally driven leadership strategies aimed at empowering educators, learners, and community stakeholders. In response to the absence of formal district-sponsored professional development, school heads established hyper-localized professional learning communities, utilizing peer coaching, internal workshops, and informal partnerships with higher education institutions and local non-governmental organizations to secure micro-grants and specialized training resources. These internal capacity-building initiatives enabled teaching staff to develop pragmatic strategies for managing multi-grade and multi-dialectal classroom environments.

Additionally, an analysis of school discipline records highlighted instances where cultural misunderstandings and implicit bias contributed to learner conflict. In response, forward-thinking principals instituted Restorative Justice (RJ) protocols alongside learner empowerment structures, establishing learner-led restorative justice teams and cultural committees. As argued by Anyon et al. (2018), the integration of restorative practices transforms discipline from a punitive administrative function into a critical pedagogical tool. This approach fosters sociopolitical consciousness among learners by encouraging them to critically analyze power dynamics, resolve cross-cultural friction, and co-create an inclusive school environment. Finally, while formal parental involvement in academic support remained limited across vulnerable rural households, principals effectively leveraged Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) and local community liaison committees to negotiate language usage and co-curricular cultural events, thereby strengthening peer-level cultural competence and enhancing school-community alignment.

In conclusion, the data from uMkhanyakude primary schools show that effective multicultural leadership is highly dependent on the principal’s capacity to build a resilient, resourceful SMT that can compensate for systemic deficiencies in funding and technical expertise, ensuring the continuous pursuit of all three CRP pillars.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study, which investigated the experiences of school principals in implementing multicultural programmes within primary schools in the uMkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal. It systematically links the empirical findings, structured around thematic clusters, back to the core objectives and research questions. The chapter concludes with evidence-based recommendations for principals, educators, and the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial DoE, and proposes directions for future research.

The following aim and research objectives guided the study:

Aim: This paper seeks to examine how the principals in the uMkhanyakude district face the problems of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century and find out the ways of improving inclusive teaching and learning.

Objectives:

1. To explore the challenges school principals experience in leading teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms.
2. To examine the competencies and forms of support that principals identify as necessary for teachers to respond effectively to multicultural classrooms.
3. To analyse how principals experience and facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders in supporting multicultural learners.
4. To identify and evaluate strategies proposed or implemented by principals to address the challenges of multicultural classrooms.

5.2 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer the following main research question and its sub-questions:

Main research question: How do school principals in the uMkhanyakude District experience and respond to the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century?

The following sub-questions emerged from the abovementioned research question:

1. What challenges do school principals experience in leading teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms?
2. What competencies and forms of support do school principals identify as necessary for teachers to respond effectively to multicultural classrooms?
3. How do school principals experience and facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders in supporting multicultural learners?
4. What strategies do school principals propose or implement to address the challenges of multicultural classrooms?

5.3 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS 1 TO 5

5.3.1 Chapter 1: Overview and Background of the Study

Chapter 1 has presented an introduction to the research along with the rationale behind the research, the research problem, research questions, objectives and aim of the research. In addition, the scope of the research has also been highlighted in Chapter 1.

5.3.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 is a critical review of research literature on multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogies, school management, language, parents, equity and teaching. This chapter locates the research in the South African and broader literature and identifies the lack of empirical focus on principals' experiences in resource-poor rural multicultural primary schools.

5.3.3 Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In chapter 3, the interpretivist qualitative case study approach was outlined. This entailed the purposive sampling of five primary school principals, conducting semi-structured interviews and document analysis and doing thematic analysis. In addition, issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed in relation to the research.

5.3.4 Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Discussion

In chapter four, findings from the interviews and documentary data were presented and analyzed through five themes and corresponding sub-themes. The analysis associated the empirical data with the research questions, CRP, Epstein's framework, and the related literature to explain principals' experiences and leadership.

5.3.5 Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings considering the research questions, draws conclusions on the findings of the study, and makes recommendations based on the results. Chapter 5 also highlights the limitations of the study and the areas for further research.

5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

These findings will initially be presented by means of the five themes that have been created in Chapter 4 and subsequently synthesized in the order of the research questions in Section 6.1.6. This approach ensures that the empirically derived themes are maintained while the findings address the posed questions.

5.4.1 THEME 1: The experiences of principals in the implementation of multicultural programmes

5.4.1.1 Understanding of multiculturalism in the school

Principals demonstrated a nuanced understanding of multiculturalism, recognising it as an intersectional concept involving race, language, socio-economic status, and gender. They viewed linguistic diversity not as a deficit, but as a potential asset for learning, aligning with the philosophical underpinnings of CRP.

5.4.1.2 Embracing multiculturalism in the school

Principals reported that embracing multiculturalism led to positive outcomes, such as increased student engagement and a sense of belonging. However, the experience of "embracing" these concepts was frequently tempered by the operational burden of implementation, where the desire to embrace diversity clashed with the reality of administrative time constraints.

5.4.1.3 The awareness of diversity in multiculturalism in the school

There was a high level of awareness regarding the diverse identities of learners. However, principals experienced challenges in translating this awareness into practice due to resistance from some staff and community members who harboured misconceptions about multicultural education, necessitating constant advocacy work by the leadership.

5.4.2 THEME 2: The role of the principal in the implementation of multicultural activities in teaching and learning

5.4.2.1 Principal role as instructional leader in the strategic directions of multiculturalism in the schools

The findings indicated that while principals set the vision, their role as instructional leaders was often compromised. Administrative overload meant that the deep instructional work such as monitoring decolonised curriculum delivery was frequently delegated to HODs, diluting the strategic focus.

5.4.2.2 Schools' strategic planning towards enhancing teaching and leading in a multicultural school

Document analysis of SIPs revealed that strategic planning was often generic. While plans mentioned equity, they frequently lacked specific, funded objectives for multicultural activities (e.g., translanguaging resources), creating a gap between strategic intent and classroom reality.

5.4.2.3 The role of the principal in engaging with various stakeholders to support multiculturalism

Principals played a pivotal role in engaging stakeholders, particularly by utilising cultural events to build relationships with diverse families. However, this engagement was often limited to social cohesion rather than deep educational partnership or "co-educatorship."

5.4.2.3 The role of the principal in equipping and supporting the teachers in a multicultural context

Principals struggled to adequately equip teachers due to financial constraints. The primary support mechanism identified was the use of **alternative strategies**, such as informal peer coaching and utilising internal staff expertise, rather than formal, external PD.

5.4.3 THEME 3: Leadership approaches were applied in schools to bring future-focused change in the teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms

5.4.3.1 Management style: School management practices and their effect on multiculturalism in a school

A collaborative/participative management style was found to be the most effective practice for implementing new language and cultural policies. By involving staff in decision-making, principals were able to reduce resistance and increase ownership of multicultural initiatives.

5.4.3.2 Parental involvement: Supportive management style and its role in implementing multicultural activities

A supportive management style was crucial for fostering parental involvement. However, the findings showed that while principals were supportive, the SGBs often lacked the specific governance skills to manage complex multicultural resource allocation effectively.

5.4.3.3 Transformational management style and its role in implementing multicultural activities

Principals utilised a transformational style to drive future-focused change, specifically in initiating the *"decolonisation agenda."* This style was essential for shifting the school culture from mere compliance to a genuine valuing of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

5.4.3.4 The need to establish a vision that integrates with and promotes multiculturalism within the school

The data emphasised that a vision is only effective if it is operationalised. Successful principals moved beyond a written vision to one that was integrated into daily rituals (e.g., assembly norms, discipline procedures), promoting multiculturalism as a core institutional value.

5.4.4 THEME 4: Supervision and support provided by principals so that teachers can meet the purposes of inclusive teaching and learning

5.4.4.1 The principal's role in supervising and providing supportive feedback to teachers

Supervision was often conducted using generic tools that failed to capture the nuances of multicultural teaching. Feedback tended to be administrative rather than pedagogical, missing opportunities to improve CRP in the classroom.

5.4.4.2 The principals' need for ongoing professional development (PD)

There was a clear finding that principals themselves lack specialised training. They expressed a strong need for ongoing PD in CRSL to understand better how to lead diverse teams and manage equity audits.

5.4.4.3 Improving classroom instruction for a suitable learning environment

Efforts to improve instruction were hampered by a lack of resources. While principals championed translanguaging, the lack of specialised coaching meant that classroom instruction often reverted to dominant language norms, failing to create an entirely suitable learning environment for all.

5.4.4.4 The support given by the district to the principals to advance their leadership roles to bring about quality results at schools

District support (ZEO/DEO) was consistently identified as inadequate. It was characterised as compliance-driven rather than capacity-building, offering little technical assistance for the specific challenges of multicultural and multilingual education.

5.4.5 THEME 5: Challenges to teaching and learning in a multicultural school environment

5.4.5.1 Background diversities of the learners

The wide range of linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds presented a logistical challenge. Principals struggled to find resources that catered to the specific "background diversities" of their unique student cohorts within a standardised curriculum.

5.4.5.2 Cultural differences and their effect on multiculturalism in the school

Cultural differences are frequently manifested as conflict or disciplinary issues. Analysis of discipline logs revealed implicit bias, where cultural misunderstandings led to disproportionate disciplinary actions against certain groups, negatively affecting the school climate.

5.4.5.3 The diverse learning needs of learners

The "diverse learning needs", particularly those related to language acquisition and cultural affirmation, were complex to meet due to class sizes and the lack of specialised support staff (e.g., bilingual aides), widening the academic achievement gap.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research question 1: What challenges do school principals experience in leading teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms?

The finding is that principals understood the concept of multicultural leadership as comprising language, unequal needs of learners, lack of resources, opposition from staff members, and absence of specialized district assistance. These problems were not limited to classroom level but rather institutional in nature and required the integration of curricular considerations, professional development, allocation of resources, and other stakeholders in order to be resolved. The finding extends the existing empirical evidence at the classroom level in South Africa as found by Athiemoolam and Vermaak (2021). The finding further confirms the environmentally-based view of culturally-responsive leadership as stated by Khalifa et al. (2016).

Research question 2: What competencies and forms of support do school principals identify as necessary for teachers to respond effectively to multicultural classrooms?

Cultural competence, differentiated instruction, translanguaging, bias reflection and the competence of developing inclusive classroom relationship were listed as significant competencies of teachers by the principals. But the study's results indicate that those competencies could not be maintained by individual efforts of the teachers alone and needed to be sustained with the help of observation, feedback, appropriate learning resources and specific professional development of the teachers. The finding is in line with Ladson-Billings' (2021) perspective regarding academic success, cultural competence and critical consciousness being the interrelated parts of CRP. What the present study introduces to the field is the leadership aspect of professional development.

Research question 3: How do school principals experience and facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, School Governing Bodies and other stakeholders in supporting multicultural learners?

The value of collaboration has been found to be both critical and erratic. The school administration utilized SGBs, cultural traditions, collaboration among the staff, and community connections to foster participation; however, parents were not involved enough due to the challenges arising from language barriers, socio-economic issues, and poor governance. According to Epstein et al. (2019), learning support arises

because of the interactions between the school, home, and community contexts, which is proved by the findings, as they indicate that multicultural practices become more efficient in case these connections are established consciously. At the same time, this study proves that participation should be both attendance and decision-making regarding languages and support for the learners.

Research question 4: What strategies do school principals propose or implement to address the challenges of multicultural classrooms?

The use of collaboration and transformational leadership, peer learning among members within, differentiated instructions, translanguaging, mobilization of local resources, partnership, and restorative practices for addressing cultural conflicts were some of the strategies that the principals used to respond to the scenario. All these represent examples of how inclusion can be maintained in the absence of sufficient external support. The implementation of the restorative practices is consistent with the research by Anyon et al. (2018). The culturally responsive school-wide leadership is consistent with the research by Khalifa et al. (2016). Nonetheless, the paper concludes that local innovations cannot substitute systemic support indefinitely.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings regarding the experiences, roles, and challenges of Principals, the following recommendations are made.

5.6.1 Recommendations to the principals and School Management Teams (SMTS)

These recommendations are rooted in observations that multicultural planning was insufficiently operationalised, instruction was limited by workloads within administration, and there were inadequate opportunities for teachers to have access to professional development. It is thus recommended that principals and SMTs should:

- Ensure effective management of the multicultural vision by ensuring that precise guidance is provided daily. This can only be achieved if the Principal and SMT have clear objectives on what it means to decolonise the curriculum and when specific cultural interventions should happen. It is recommended that Principals share the multicultural planning with their staff at their earliest convenience to ensure that the entire team is on board with the inclusive results

that need to be attained. In this way, educators will know what is expected of them regarding equity and diversity. This will impact how they plan their lessons, the translanguaging strategies and diverse materials they choose to utilise in their classrooms, and how effectively they manage diverse learner needs. The desired goals will shift from being a personal philosophical preference to being a collective school objective.

- Manage instructional time well, attainable through constant and consistent monitoring and controlling of how teachers utilise time for home language support and cultural affirmation within the timetable.
- Conduct thorough observations of the teachers within their department. It is recommended that the Principals and HODs timeously provide feedback to teachers so that challenges regarding implicit bias or exclusionary practices are identified swiftly. In this way, the SMT gets to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each teacher in terms of Cultural Competence, something that can serve as a measuring tool for improvement.
- Monitor the teachers' lesson plans frequently. This can also serve as a curriculum monitoring instrument, as the lesson plans will display how far the teacher is with the syllabus and the CRP practices (such as Indigenous Knowledge Systems) that they incorporate to enhance multicultural education.
- Ongoing encouragement of specialised training, which can be achieved through the principal ensuring that their teachers attend all the necessary workshops on anti-bias and multilingual education. It is recommended that the principals themselves attend the aforementioned workshops as well to bridge the gap in CRSL.
- Offer continuous teacher and learner support, achievable by the principals making sure that both teachers and learners have the necessary pedagogical materials (e.g., multilingual readers) and equipment. It is recommended that the principals plan and communicate with the teachers on what is needed. In this way, they have all their teachers' requests when compiling the needs analysis for Resource Mobilisation.
- Ensure that the schools work with other stakeholders to improve learners' academic performance; this involves forming collaborations with higher educational institutions, NGOs, community elders, and the DoE in enhancing the incorporation of multicultural practices. Through forming solid

collaborations, Principals can advocate that learners engage with community mentors. This act can serve as a motivational tool for learners to not just have a theoretical perspective of their culture, but rather to get the full exposure of their heritage as an asset.

- Set in motion motivating events for the learners, things like Cultural Heritage Days, career days with diverse role models, etc. It is recommended that successful icons from diverse backgrounds be brought to schools to motivate and encourage the learners. This will inspire the learners to work harder and have a practical insight into how education can better one's life, regardless of their linguistic background.

5.6.2 Recommendations to educators

The recommendations for teachers are drawn from findings on language diversity, implicit bias, differential treatment, and the need for effective collaboration among teachers. The recommendations are thus urging educators to:

- Ensure effective classroom management by ensuring that precise multilingual norms are established daily, which can only be achieved if the educator has clear objectives on how to use translanguaging to clarify concepts. It is recommended that educators share these norms with learners to ensure that the entire class is on board with the values of mutual respect. In this way, learners will know that their home language is an asset.
- Conduct thorough self-reflection on teaching practices. It is recommended that educators timeously reflect on their own implicit biases so that challenges in student-teacher relationships are identified swiftly. In this way, the educator gets to analyse their own strengths and weaknesses, something that can serve as a measuring tool for personal growth in Cultural Competence.
- Offer continuous learner support through peer networks, which can be achieved by educators ensuring that learners have the support needed to bridge language gaps. It is recommended that educators plan and collaborate with colleagues to share best practices. In this way, they create a community of practice that compensates for the lack of formal district training.

5.6.3 Recommendations to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Education within the uMkhanyakude district

Recommendations have been made for the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Education from the findings that district support was focused mainly on compliance, there was little provision of dedicated multicultural resources and principals lacked technical expertise. Recommendations have been made for the Department to:

- Ensure effective systemic support by ensuring that precise technical guidance is provided regularly, which can only be achieved if the ZEO/DEO has clear objectives on what curriculum decolonisation looks like in practice. It is recommended that the district share these protocols with Principals at their earliest convenience to ensure that all schools are on board with the equity results that need to be attained.
- Monitor the schools' resource allocation frequently, which can also serve as an equity monitoring instrument, as the audits will display how far the school is with procuring diverse materials and the financial practices they incorporate to enhance multicultural education.
- Ongoing encouragement of specialised training, which can be achieved through the DoE, ensuring that Principals attend mandatory workshops on CRSL. It is recommended that Subject Advisors themselves attend the aforementioned workshops as well to provide better support.

5.7 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research is required to extend the current study beyond the scope of a single rural district as well as a sample of principal participants selected for purposeful reasons. Comparison of rural, peri-urban, and urban districts could help to identify how varying resource settings affect multicultural leadership practices and the adoption of CRP. Longitudinal studies could investigate how over a number of years the practice of leadership development, translanguaging, and stakeholder collaborations results in changes in the cultural climate of schools and learning outcomes. Mixed-methods studies could utilize both the data of qualitative interviews as well as quantitative indicators to verify and generalize the findings of the current study. Future qualitative studies will also need to involve learners, teachers, SGB members, and parents to compare the perspective of principals with those of other stakeholders. Special

attention needs to be paid to the role of SGB leadership in resource equality as well as to the impact of CRSL leadership training of principals on their instructional and community leadership.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was deliberately limited to five purposively sampled public rural primary schools in the uMkhanyakude District and the experiences of their principals. This means that the findings generated are therefore specific to the contexts and cannot be generalized to other schools in KwaZulu-Natal or even in the whole country. This is because different demographic and governance contexts could be present in urban and peri-urban areas, in private and secondary school settings, and the experiences of other participants such as teachers, pupils, parents and district officials were not analyzed. The use of interviews and document analysis as tools of data collection added credibility through the process of triangulation, while a thorough explanation of the context will help readers determine whether the findings are transferable to similar rural contexts.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This study finds that meeting the challenges of teaching multicultural classrooms in the uMkhanyakude district is contingent upon the school principals operating as instructional leaders, cultural brokers, advocates and facilitators of school-families-community interactions. The results lend validity to CRP since academic success, cultural responsiveness, and critical consciousness require school-wide leadership contexts more so than classroom pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2021). In addition, they support the notion by Epstein et al. (2019) that learner assistance relies upon deliberate interaction between schools, families, and communities. Equally important, this research adds to the body of knowledge in that it illustrates that multicultural schools' ability to apply culturally responsive leadership is affected by insufficient specialized training, lack of technical assistance and few resources. Therefore, while locally developed approaches such as peer mentoring, stakeholder collaboration, translanguaging and restorative justice are valuable, they need to be complemented

with adequate district-level professional development, guidance and resource provision for multicultural education to become a reality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: UNISA Ethics Approval

UNISA university of south africa

UNISA COLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 15 November 2024

Ref: **2024/11/15/000000365/06/RB**
Name: **Ms HIENGIWE PRINCESS NYATHI**
Student No.: **53970519**

Decision: Ethics Approval form

Dear **Ms HIENGIWE PRINCESS NYATHI**

Researcher(s): Name: **Ms HIENGIWE PRINCESS NYATHI**
E-mail address: 53970519@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: **: 0723944546**

Supervisor: Name: **Prof OC Potokri**
E-mail address: cnuvie@gmail.com
Telephone: **0842671740**

Title of research: ***CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS IN THE 21 ST CENTURY IN UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT BY SCHOOL LEADERS.***

Qualification: **MEd**

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/11/15** to **2027/11/15**.

*The **low risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **15 November 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
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www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. The study's risk level is Category 2- Low risk: Human participants are involved and there is foreseeable risk of inconvenience. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information is involved.
9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2027/11/15.** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2024/11/15/00000365/06/RB** *should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof RB Monyai
Acting Head: CEDU Research
monyarb@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean: CEDU
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

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Appendix B: Letter to KZN DoE requesting permission to conduct research

Enq: NYATHI H.P

P.O. Box 12229

Mtubatuba

3935

Contact: 0723944546

Email: nyathihlengiwe53@gmail.com

Date: 31 January 2025

The Head of Department

Department of Education KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg

3201

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to collect data in your schools

I am a Masters student at UNISA researching on the topic: Confronting the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century in Umkhanyakude district by school leaders.

I will use observations, interviews, focus group and document analysis to collect data. My participants in this study will be 8 principals and two teachers who are working in private schools with multicultural classrooms, interviews of principals will be conducted at schools and at the participants' convenience time after school ensuring that the process does not interfere with the daily duties of participants. The interviews would last between 30-40 minutes per interview. In this study, I will consider ethical dimensions such as confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and freedom of participation. It is vital to obtain the participants' informed consent in order to protect them from any harm.

Appendix C: Lettzer from KZN DoE granting permission to conduct research



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X 9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201 Ref: 2/4/8/758
Enquiries : Ms Phindile Duma Email : research@kzndoe.gov.za Tel : 033 392 1063/ 031 360 6539

Ms HP Nyathi
P.O Box 1135
Mtubatuba
3935

BY EMAIL: nyathihlengiwe53@gmail.com

Dear Ms Nyathi

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DOE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT"** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 March 2025 to 18 April 2028.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

MR GN NGCOBO
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
KZN EDUCATION
DATE: 10/03/2025

INSPIRING NEW HOPE

Appendix D: Letter to the Principal requesting permission to conduct research

TO : Principal

FROM : Ms Princess Nyathi (MEd)

DATE : 31 January 2025

SUBJECT : REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH ON CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Masters student at the University of South Africa where in I am required to complete a research project in order to be awarded a degree in the field of Education.

The title of the study is, "**Confronting the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century in uMkhanyakude district by school leaders**".

As this study implies, the study will be concerned with confronting the challenges of multicultural classrooms by school leaders. Culture and its diversities is being experienced in classes in different ways including languages, ethnicity, religious beliefs, race and traditions. It is therefore my great honour and privilege to invite you as principal to become a voluntary participant and share with me your experiences.

I am intending to gather information in this research study by means of semi-structured individual interviews. Each interview will not exceed 1 hour and will be conducted on a date and at the venue and time of your own choice. With your kind permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis.

Please understand that your decision to participate is entirely voluntary and that your choice to participate or not will in no way affect your relationship with your employer or my University. Again, I want to assure you that the data gathered during this research study will be treated confidentially, and that no one will have access to obtain the raw data collected during interviews. At no time will you as an individual be

mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

In order to ensure that you are comfortable with the information you give, you will be provided with a confidential written transcript of your own interview for which you will then be required to provide final approval of both content and the accuracy of information. You will also be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences for you personally. At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations based on these findings made by the researcher.

If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form found on the final page of this invitation and returning it to me.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

Nyathi H.P

076 834 7306

Signature: 

Consent Form: Voluntary Participation In The Research Study Entitled

I, _____, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by Miss HP NYATHI, currently a student enrolled for a Masters at the University of South Africa. I further declare that I understand, as they were explained to me by the researcher, the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences and benefits and methods of collecting information proposed by the researcher, as well as the means by which she will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information she collects.

Name and Surname .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Contact Number .....

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Interview schedule for principals

This is a study of about confronting multicultural classrooms in the 21st century in Umkhanyakude district by school leaders in KwaMsane circuit, KwaZulu-Natal.

1. What are the difficulties of leading schools with multicultural students in the 21st century?

2. How do educators respond to challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century in your school?

3. What are your roles as principal in dealing with multicultural classrooms in your school?

4. What leadership approaches were applied in the private schools to bring future focused change in the challenges of multicultural classrooms?

5. To what extent does the school principal provide supervision and support department heads and teachers to deal with challenges of multicultural classrooms (instructional leadership)?

Interview Schedule of Focus Group (Educators/ School Management)

1. What is experience in the implementation multicultural classrooms ?

---

2. How do you feel about this programme?

---

3. What other school improvement measures will you suggest in dealing with multicultural challenges?

---

4. To what extent do the school leadership and management team in the school run to confront multicultural classrooms?

---

5. How do zone education offices and district education offices provide technical assistance to primary schools in order to deal with multicultural challenges?

---

6. What leadership and management strategies were applied in your respective primary schools to bring future focused change in multicultural classrooms?

---

7. Any suggestions or other information that I did not ask, but important about confronting challenges of multicultural classrooms?

Appendix F: Letter from the Language Editor

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REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN (SA)
ZERT 10085 (UNISA)

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072 377 5585
carmen@ufs.ac.za

CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

This certifies that I have edited the research report detailed below for language.

Title:

"Confronting the challenges of multicultural classrooms in the 21st century in uMkhanyakude district by school leaders"

by

Hlengiwe Princess Nyathi
Student No. 53970519

Regards

Carmen Nel

Carmen Nel
21 January 2026

Professional editing of articles, thesis, dissertations and books

APPENDIX G: TURNITIN REPORT

PAPER NAME
NYATHI
Confronting the challenges of multicultural
l classrooms in the 21st century in Umkhanyakude district by school leaders.do cx

AUTHOR: HLENGIWE PRINCESS

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