

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE INQUIRY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is not the only country to have known racial segregation and racial inequality. Many other countries, including some of the so-called best democracies of our age, have practised this to a greater or lesser extent. Yet, South Africa is the only country where racism (in the 20th century) was enshrined in the Constitution and enforced - through the aid of legislation - by successive whites-only governments from 1948. What made South Africa a racially segregated country of a special kind was the fact that unlike other countries that had practised segregation, the so-called politically powerless races were in the majority. In terms of the Population Registration Act, Act No. 30 of 1950, the country's population was classified into four main racial categories, namely: whites (European), African (natives), coloureds and Asians (Indian). In the words of Wilson and Thompson (1975: 402), the Act clearly defined “who was who and, therefore, entitled to what.”

Before and during apartheid, South African public schools were ‘strictly’ segregated according to race (Steyn, Steyn & de Waal, 1998:38). Learners attended separate schools according to the four main population groups, namely Blacks, Whites, Coloureds and Indians (Steyn *et al.*, 1998:24). Racial separation was the defining feature of schools during the colonial and apartheid eras, which explains why this inquiry examines racial integration in the post-colonial and post-apartheid eras (Nkomo, McKinney & Chisholm, 2004: 5). The study focuses on the way learners deal with diversity on a daily basis at their school. In search of what Pandor (2004: 14) calls “quality education”, black learners overwhelmed the South African education system, by migrating from their under-resourced and underdeveloped rural and township²

2. According to the Group Areas Act, Act No. 41 of 1950, non-Whites in South Africa were placed in settlements referred to as Townships. These were situated just outside white living areas. The African townships were mostly on Zone 3 land which was the land adjacent to factories. They lived relatively poor, under-resourced lives. People who lived in these townships had to commute to and from work using trains and taxis to access the white designated

schools to affluent and well-resourced neighbouring suburban schools. In fact, this was the movement of African³ learners to the nearby coloured,⁴ Indian⁵ and white⁶ schools. There has not been any movement in the direction of black schools (Soudien, 2004: 89).

On the basis of the *Group Areas Act, Act No. 41 of 1950*, the *Population Registration Act, Act No. 30 of 1950* and other legislation - the details of which are given in Chapter 2 - which were specifically adopted to make racial segregation work, the different race groups were accorded different and unequal life opportunities in South Africa. However, the end of apartheid and the advent of democracy in 1994 legally ended this situation. Among the changes resulting from this so-called “small miracle of 1994” (Phatlane, 2006:1) were deliberate post-apartheid efforts to create a non-racial society. For practical reasons, these efforts could only be realised by deliberately breaking down the racial barriers which were artificially constructed by apartheid - including the

areas. During apartheid rule there were sufficient police to knock at every door every night - in all these townships - to demand permits from the occupants of the houses. Anyone who was found without a permit was assaulted and arrested.

3. In this study I define ‘African’ as encompassing the population categories that were classified as non-Whites by the South African Population Registration Act, Act No. 30 of 1950 and which did not form part of the Tricameral parliament system in 1984. In this study Africans are those who were classified in terms of their ethnicities, namely Nguni and Sotho. Among the Nguni are the Zulus, Xhosas, Tsongas, Vendas, Swatis and Ndebeles and among the Sotho are the Pedis, Tswanas and S. Sotho-speaking people of the apartheid era. They were referred to as ‘Blacks’. In the Employment Equity Act, the term ‘Black’ refers to Africans, Coloureds and Indians. It should be noted that references used in this study might sometimes use the term ‘Blacks’ to mean non-Whites and also to mean ‘Africans’, interchangeably.

4. According to the race classification of South Africa, Coloureds were people born from mixed racial relationships – especially those between Africans and Whites. They were treated better than the Africans. They have a rich culture and ethnicities, such as the Griquas and the Malays, etc.

5. My study takes cognisance of the fact that most Indians regard themselves as Blacks and also as Africans. In South Africa, the Indians are the descendants of Indians who came to Kwa-Zulu Natal in the 1860s to work on the sugar plantations.

6. In my study Whites refer to the descendants of the Dutch (1652), British (1820), other European countries and countries, such as the United States of America (USA), who either occupied and/or colonised Africa and who emigrated to - and settled - in South Africa. This includes - but is not limited to - different “white ethnicities”, such as the British, Irish, Scottish, Italians, Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, etc., and their inner ethnicities within each group. They were never divided in terms of their original languages or countries of origin; they were always referred to as white people as they will be referred to in this study.

South Africans refer to all the people of South Africa - black and white.

desegregation and deracialisation of the schooling system through the promotion of school integration.

Against this background, it is my intention to determine - in this study - how learners, who have been so divided and denied any form of social interaction across race by apartheid, now experience a desegregated learning environment at Van Den Berg High School - a former Whites-only Afrikaans medium school in South Africa. A number of considerations have guided and influenced my selection of the school. I will return to these considerations later in the chapter. The main purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of diversity by learners who had, historically, been divided by race yet, today, share a common educational space in a desegregated school environment. Another intention of this study is to make a contribution to issues of diversity in education in South Africa. Historically, race is inscribed in the functioning of everyday life by schools where the majority of learners spend a great part of their lives (Nkomo *et al.*, 2004:4). This provided me with further reasons to find answers to my questions in a school because schools are institutions of socialisation and they become contested terrain in a changing society (Keto, 1990: 26, Bell; 2004:56). The following research question guided this study:

How do learners, who were historically divided by apartheid purely on racial grounds, now, experience a desegregated school environment?

Responding to the challenges of racial diversity in schools raises other complex and wide-ranging questions which have general relevance to school managements today (Heystek *et al.*, 1999: 187). Though I was particularly interested in the foregoing question, I also recognised that in order to get to the bottom of these experiences, I had to confront and find answers to the following sub-questions:

- How does prejudice - resulting from the long history of discrimination and racial separation - shape learners' perceptions of one another?
- How do such perceptions aid or hinder integration?
- How does Van Den Berg High School, in particular, account for the trajectory of integration in the school since desegregation?

1.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

A great deal of research has been conducted on educational change, reform and transformation in the world (Sarup, 1986: 23; Sarup, 1991: 63; Fullan, 1991: 3; Morris *et al*, 2003: 79). Research done in South Africa on educational change has tracked change in desegregated schools after the introduction of the Clase models⁷ in 1990 and after the South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996. These research projects present a picture of minimal changes in the practices of such schools and an absence of co-ordinated programmes to address the issues of diversity and inequality (Naidoo, 1996a; Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Sekete *et al*, 2001) Learners and educators in desegregated schools continue to face significant challenges regarding integration and diversity. It is almost up to individual schools to proceed either with minimal direction or without direction from the Department of Education (Carrim, 1998: 21).

A few other research projects - focusing on problems encountered by desegregated schools - have also been conducted (Christie, 1990; Metcalfe, 1991; Carrim, 1992, 1995; Naidoo, 1996b; Soudien, 1998; Zafar, 1998). These studies laid a firm foundation for studies in integration and desegregation in the face of the changing environmental circumstances; the persistence of racial attitudes and stereotypes; as well as a general resistance to change (Vally & Dalamba, 1999). It seemed equally important to start identifying emergent interactions among learners in desegregated schools which seemed to be deviating from the established norm. What happens in desegregated schools is also of importance to all other schools in South Africa because desegregated or de-racialised schools (Sujee, 2003; Carrim, 1992) in South Africa can, possibly, be the foundation of social cohesion for a country which was torn apart for decades by racial divisions and discrimination.

It is often said that every project bears the mark of the intellectual interactions that preceded it. Therefore, previous research - such as the above - provided a necessary backdrop to this inquiry. However, the focus of my study is on what has not been

7. In 1990 Mr Piet Clase, the then Minister of Education and Culture in the House of Assembly, gave all white schools a choice of 3 models of school administration to desegregate. They had to choose between Model A, Model B and Model C. What each of the models entailed is explained in Chapter 2.

central in these studies. The overriding purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the social dynamics of diversity in a desegregated South African public high school where learners from different backgrounds attend school together. Social dynamics include experiences, relationships, interactions, attitudes, intentions, beliefs, reasons and the behaviour of people. I wanted to find out whether - as a result of desegregation efforts - learners at this particular school are racially integrating, both socially and otherwise. If not, I wanted to find the reason for this and what the actual impediments to integration - perceived or real - are.

Although there were earlier attempts in the South African schooling system where unofficial desegregation took place in schools and black and white learners attended school together (Christie: 1992: 29), schools in this country were only legally desegregated in 1997 with the introduction of the South African Schools Act. In terms of this legislation learners from different racial groups now attend school together - after four decades of institutionalised segregation. In fact, apartheid kept learners from diverse social and cultural backgrounds apart. This, and other factors, made racial integration after 1994 a difficult mission to accomplish in some schools - and an impossible one in others. It also limited opportunities for interpersonal contact between black and white learners. The other significant impact of this racial polarisation was that it limited access to knowledge about the ‘others’ through first-hand acquaintance that would otherwise result from day-to-day interaction. The result of all this was general ignorance about the way the different racial groups lived which, in turn, provided a fertile climate for the creation of myths and, sometimes, inaccurate perceptions about each other.

In terms of the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993, the victory of the African National Congress in 1994 led to the establishment - for the first five years after 1994 - of a Government of National Unity, which displaced the Afrikaner Nationalist’s apartheid government. This was an achievement hailed by the international community as the “political miracle of the 90s” (Phatlane, 2006:1).

The movement of African learners to formerly segregated schools became a phenomenon for much research attention and it presented education challenges (Christie, 1990; Gaganakis, 1990; Carrim, 1992; Soudien, 1996, 1998a, 1998b; Carrim

& Soudien, 1999; Chisholm, 1999; Dolby, 2001; Soudien & Sayed, 2004; Zafar, 1998). These challenges included increased learner-educator ratios; the depopulation of township and rural schools; the over-population of suburban schools; commuting learner problems; and educator challenges in teaching diverse learner classrooms - in terms of race, ethnicity, class and/or religion (Carrim, 1992; Ranchod, 1997; Van Heerden, 1998; Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Machaisa, 2004; Meier, 2005).

In an attempt to address the problems brought about by learner migration and learner urbanisation, the school system sought to implement - among other strategies - a system of educator redeployment where educators from overstaffed schools were placed in schools and areas that needed those most, due to the increase in learner numbers. Township and rural schools were revamped through school zoning and school feeder schemes. The registration of learners was prioritised for learners who stayed - or whose parents worked - within the vicinity of the school (Schools Act, 1996). School clusters were developed to bring schools that were well-resourced together with those that did not have enough resources. Learners were provided with food in their own schools through school feeding schemes. Educators were trained and given appropriate learning and teaching support materials.

The new era promised - among other things - to transform South African policies to ensure that all South African children would have access to a school of their choice and that no child would be turned away from a school on the grounds of race, ethnicity, class and/or religion, or even financial position of parents. However, it is evident that - even in the new dispensation - many inequalities still persist. Schools in the country are not all desegregated. However, for economic reasons, most of the schools in the Greater Tshwane area of Gauteng Province are desegregated. There are learners from diverse backgrounds enrolled in these schools.

Closely analysed, the desegregation of a school is the initial stage of eventual social integration. It deals more with the quantitative aspects of the process of school integration and, usually, concentrates on the demographics of the learners and staff of the school (Naidoo, 1996: 1-4; Nkomo *et al*, 2004: 1). It is the intention of this study to go a step further and to examine the qualitative elements of integration which, generally, refers to the incorporation of different ethnic or racial groups in the same

classes in a school (Corsini, 2002: 866). School integration includes using the content from diverse groups when teaching concepts and skills; helping students to understand how knowledge in the various disciplines is constructed; helping students to develop positive intergroup attitudes and behaviours; and modifying teaching and learning strategies so that students from different racial, cultural, language, and social class groups will experience equal status in the culture and life of the school (Banks *et al*, 2001: 45; Irvine, 2003: 124). The Brown *versus* The Topeka Board of Education case of 1954 is a landmark case that determined the future of education in the United States of America (USA) and in the world as a whole in terms of aiming to provide 'equal' educational opportunities for both black and white students (Carter, 2004: 195).

If one analyses the above guidelines of what one would expect in an integrated school then one can deduce that social integration in a school refers to more than just the numbers of black and white learners, but it include changing the school to meet the needs of all the learners; fostering meaningful interaction amongst learners in the classroom, on the playground and during extra-mural activities; as well as instilling a human rights culture (Nkomo *et al*, 2004: 2). The behaviour, attitudes, experiences, interaction and perspectives of learners were studied.

The aim of the South African government in desegregating schools - both public and independent - was to bring about integration among learners from different backgrounds in order to provide equal educational opportunities for all learners (Naidoo, 1996:11; Sujee, 2003:13). The South African context calls for "integrated pluralism" - an approach in a desegregated school whereby the differences among learners and staff are recognised and accepted, but where an emphasis is placed on fostering respect and interaction. This approach explicitly affirms the educational value inherent in exposing all learners to a diversity of perspectives and behavioural repertoires and it is structured to achieve mutual information exchange, influence, and acceptance (Orfield, 2004: 96). This study examines the question as to whether or not desegregation brings about integration, interaction and respect among learners of different races.

It was necessary to embark on a study such as this in order to establish how the process of desegregation has unfolded in a former Afrikaans medium high school after the

post-apartheid government has opened the doors of learning of all schools to all learners in South Africa. Both the Constitution of South Africa and the South African Schools Act give every learner the right to basic education. In spite of the foregoing, the process of desegregating schools to allow learners from diverse backgrounds to attend the same school has remained slow in some schools and no progress has been made at all in others. The levels of entrenched democratic habits have, therefore, not really been tested (Adam & Moodley, 2004: 160). In *The Pedagogy of Domination* Nkomo maintains that one cannot, reasonably, expect those who have erected apartheid - directly or indirectly - and benefited from it to be able to effectively dismantle it (1990: 13). This study examines the learners' understanding of diversity; their perceptions about 'other races'; their relationships and interaction with learners from other 'races'; their attitudes towards people who are different from them; and the way they speak and respond to those people.

The Race and Values Directorate and the Gender Directorate of the Department of Education (DoE) vaguely address the issue of inequality by pointing out the following in their vision:

- All learners have access to teaching and learning and are catered for in the schools.
- All learners feel welcome in the classroom, irrespective of racial, class, religious and language background (DoE, 2006: 12)

However, at the time of this research, there was neither a plan of action nor a programme in place for desegregated schools to use as guidelines or frame of reference to facilitate their day-to-day management (Vally & Dalamba, 1999). Only recently (2006), the DoE published a monograph, entitled *Strategy for racial integration*, which supports the argument that there are no specific programmes for desegregated schools and attempts to give some general guidelines in this regard. This monograph was published after this research was carried out and after a number of colloquia, workshops and conferences - to which I contributed - had made recommendations to government to that effect.

The importance of this study also lies in the fact that before the publication of this monograph, schools were forced to survive in their own strategies. Even in the post-apartheid period some schools are still without direction and assistance from the education authorities in dealing with issues such as desegregation and diversity. Without claiming to provide a needed recipe in this connection, this study seeks to close the gap by suggesting a practical approach to the issue of school integration that can be applied by all schools that are confronted with the pressure to desegregate. It deals with the issue of transformation and its attendant challenges so that the development of a critical citizenry can be advanced. According to Jansen, the curriculum “should be informed by research; which examines both the autonomy and the interrelationship among the three constructs of race, class and gender in the South African context” (1990:331). This can be achieved if - amongst other things - people’s experiences are revealed through research. It is for this reason that I wished to understand how one of these constructs - ‘race’ - was experienced in a South African desegregated school context.

By drawing attention to how South African learners understand and deal with diversity on a day-to-day basis, this study makes a contribution to the debate on educational change. South African and international scholars will understand the transformation process taking place in South African schools because educational transformation is going to be a feature of education systems for a long time to come. Principle 11 of the White Paper on the Provision of Education in South Africa states that “effective provision of education shall be based on continuing research” (RSA, 1983:3).

The aim of research in education is also to directly address the improvement of practice and to influence educational policymaking (Stenhouse: 1985: 266). Even if an ethnographic case study is specific to context, and does not aim at generalising the findings, it can influence policy. At the National Conference on Racism in 2000 a programme of action was adopted which - amongst other things - aimed at undertaking research to find ways of effectively promoting and deepening respect for traditional cultures with a view to ensuring respect and understanding for their search for identity and respect for their cultures and values so that a common nationhood could be forged out of difference and diversity (SAHRC, 2000: S [2]).

1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

It is still a problem in South Africa that the post-apartheid government has not yet designed programmes to teach and educate those who have learnt discriminatory practices to learn how *not to* discriminate - and for those who have learned to be receptive of discrimination, to challenge it. For practical reasons, these practices of non-discrimination and of challenging discrimination cannot happen automatically. Pandor, the National Minister of Education in South Africa, also acknowledged this fact when she said that “Our approach of ‘first mix then engage’ reflects a somewhat naïve faith in our goodness of heart” (Pandor, 2004:14).

Race relations play an important part in fostering growth and development within communities (Naidoo, 1996:4). South Africa is managing to address its dark history of discrimination and continues to be seen as a model for other countries that still face various forms of discrimination (Naidoo, 1996: 5). Some South Africans believe that our ‘tortuous’ history has been overcome, while others feel that the reality on the ground, today, suggests the opposite. It is difficult in South Africa to implement diversity education or citizenship education because - as Adam and Moodley rightly observe - in 1993 the government did not have a clear direction of where to lead the schools (Adam & Moodley, 1993:158). Pandor maintains that “our learners in desegregated schools in South Africa are not integrating” (Pandor, 2004:13). Therefore, my wish in this study is to understand what the learners’ actual experiences are and if they are desegregated but not integrating.

According to Pandor, “Integration continues to be the least discussed and most ignored aspect of education because ‘all’ of us are embarrassed to acknowledge that there is still an issue out there calling for our urgent attention” (2004:11). Legislation outlawing all forms of discrimination in the country has been introduced (Mothata, 2000: v). Yet, in spite of the fact that Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees the protection of human rights, there is evidence that some communities and individuals are still experiencing racial discrimination in one way or another (Brown, 1997:6). It seems logical to argue that *if, indeed*, discriminatory practices are *learnt*, then practices that do not discriminate *can also be learned*.

There are numerous Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and parastatal-driven programmes, but very few government driven programmes. What the government does is to publish booklets that emphasise values that must form the basis of school policies and practices which - in my view - are usually not very specific. The drawing up of the different policies at school level is still the responsibility of individual school governing bodies. The former Minister of Education in South Africa, Kader Asmal, argued that there is not a single remedy to different school situations. However, I think any guidelines given to schools should not be vague – they should be very specific.

According to a Department of Education publication, “there are many loopholes in the legal system which allows some schools to manipulate it” (DoE, 2001:13). These loopholes are used by some School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and principals to manage schools according to the letter of the law rather than “according to principle” with the aim to avoid genuinely integrated schools to flourish (DoE, 2001:13). It would, then, be logical to ask questions about the principles and the loopholes, such as “What are those ‘principles’ that should guide or inform the school’s management of diversity?” and “Why are they not specific and readily available for desegregated schools to use in order to avoid alleged manipulation by some SGBs and headmasters?” The fact that it is still left in the hands of the SGBs to decide on very pertinent issues affecting the national plan of school integration is totally unacceptable because they usually perpetuate the cultural ethos of the schools by maintaining the staff composition and the composition of the SGBs which delay - if not prevent - integration *per se*.

Some researchers do not think that programmes and the training of people to learn not to discriminate is enough to teach them not to discriminate. In an interview with Nieuwenhuis (May 15, 2004) on the issue of ‘emotional and psychological effects of discrimination’ he argued that people who regard others as less human should first go through what he calls “a significant emotional life experience” for them to stop discriminating against others in all sorts of ways. According to him, designing programmes alone cannot stop people from discriminating against others. I think the programmes may be the starting point in the race against ‘race’.

1.4 INTEREST IN THIS AREA OF RESEARCH

My experience as an educator at a former English, Whites-only primary school in Pretoria, Gauteng Province - which is also desegregated - has provided part of the motivation for this research. It was, indeed, a gratifying experience to teach Black, Coloured, White and Indian learners to speak Sepedi which is one of the indigenous languages of South Africa and which is also my first language. What was even more remarkable was that the learners encouraged their parents to organise and attend Sepedi classes in the evenings. I, then, taught the parents, who consisted - amongst others - of university professors, psychologists, medical practitioners, teachers and professionals of various kinds.

The general interest in this community in learning Sepedi was, particularly, commendable in the light of our historical background and the general alienation of African cultures, including their languages, in the curriculum of many schools in the country. The language policy of this particular school included the compulsory learning of Sepedi by learners from Grades 4 to 7. I later terminated my services at this school - after five years - in order to carry out this research on a full-time basis. Within a community with this attitude towards people different from them, also hosted an Afrikaans medium high school, a kilometre away from the English-medium school where I used to teach. This is the High School where I carried out my research

I was also involved as a junior researcher in a project on school integration - funded by South Africa-Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD). The research project set out to identify 'best practices' in teaching learners in racially diverse classrooms. I was involved in this research project primarily because its objectives corresponded very closely with those of my own research.

My focus was on the issue of the racial diversity of learners and how they experienced this in their particular school on a day-to-day basis. While barely a decade ago the primary preoccupation of the post-apartheid education authorities was to ensure that black learners had access to formerly Whites-only public schools, attention has now shifted to achieving the 'full integration' of learners enrolled in such schools. Studies - such as this one - is therefore an exploration into what was not explored before.

This study assumes that former Model C schools in South Africa have racially diverse learners and are in the process of transformation. Some schools encounter serious problems; some encounter minimal problems; while others seem not to encounter any problems at all. It is worthwhile studying the experiences of learners in the transformation process of schools in South Africa - focusing on their experiences of racial diversity in their specific schools. Learners are, usually, most affected in the process of desegregation because it is, mostly, the learner populations that are desegregated and their experiences, therefore, shed more light on the transformation process in other schools.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

Examining the experiences of learners called for a qualitative research approach because studying learners qualitatively helps researchers to get to know them personally and to experience what they experience in their daily activities at school - an advantage that other researchers, using different research approaches, do not have (Bogdan *et al.*, 1992:7, Creswell, 1998: 212). The school life is, in fact, a 'natural setting' for this inquiry (De Vos, 1998:246; Henning *et al.*, 2004:3).

Another reason why a qualitative approach was used for this study is the 'emergent design' of qualitative enquiries which makes it possible for the researcher to make - and change - decisions about data collection strategies during the course of the study (Merriam, 1988: 71). The emergent design means that the researcher does inductive theorising which further implies that one does not have to do research with a blueprint decided and planned in advance, but instead one makes sense of what one finds out only during and when one is busy finding it out (Gillham, 2000:2). I did not know what to expect at first, and even though I put a plan in place I was prepared to adjust it should the need arise.

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research will be defined as "the utilisation of different qualitative data collection techniques, with the aim to describe, to make sense of, and to interpret or reconstruct" (De Vos, 1998:239) the interaction of the diverse

ances in terms of the meanings that learners attach to it. The main objective of qualitative research is not only to find out what happens, but also how it happens and why it happens the way it does (Henning *et al.*, 2004:3). Qualitative research is more context-bound and the findings are – mostly - specific, although generalisation cannot be totally ruled out because those findings can be transferred to a similar context and a similar situation at a particular point in time.

This inquiry is situated in the social constructionist research paradigm. I am interested in the experiences - in particular, the experiences of learners about diversity in their school. The descriptions of the learners' intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning-making and self-understanding (Henning *et al.*, 2004:20) - as described and constructed by the learners themselves - are regarded as truth and as knowledge. Diversity and how the learners experienced and perceived it is better understood through interpretation which is influenced by, and also interacts with, the social context (Henning *et al.*, 2004:20).

During the interpretation of this phenomenon of diversity, the cultural and historical meanings could not be ignored and were taken into consideration (Crotty, 1996: 67). This interpretation is in the form of a framework that captures the complex factors shaping the school lives and experiences of learners. It consists of the three interlocking core elements of identity: gender, race and social class - with history and context interwoven into the theoretical framework (Bell & Nkomo, 2001: 16) of multiculturalism, diversity education, anti-racist education and what Banks *et al* (2004) call citizenship education. These theories serve as the pillars for this study of diversity and they are discussed later in this chapter.

The social constructivist paradigm has methodological implications - that is why I utilised an ethnographic case study design for this inquiry which called for document analysis, participant and non-participant observations, informal conversations and in-depth interviews as data collection methods to adhere to the principle that the sources of 'truth' are varied. Reality is imperfectly grasped because no one scientist can claim to objectively capture reality and because human beings approach phenomena with their personal biases and theories (Henning *et al*, 2004:21). I have triangulated my data collection methods in order to enhance the possibility of getting common varied truth

from the data. The different data collection methods yielded similar results; therefore the credibility of the study was enhanced.

During the analysis I read through the data and embarked on preliminary coding - taking codes straight from the data. Because of what I had read from previous research projects on integration, it took me some time to capture the narrative that the data was conveying as it portrayed a different message. Because I had a lot of data, I used computer-based, qualitative data analysis software which helped a great deal in the organisation of the interview data and in substantiating the manual codes already established. I must mention that after the inductive open coding in ATLAS.Ti, the data became so organised that it was a challenge to select what to use and what not to use in the report. This is when the research question became useful.

The data tells the story of an integrating school - from its crawling stages to its present position. Henning and Mouton recommend that a researcher does his/her own data analysis because they believe you then get to “know your data like you know yourself.” If you do the analysis yourself, you can quickly pick up a similarity and a difference or something strange within the data (Henning, 2004:105; Mouton, 2001:73). While I agree with the idea of doing my own manual analysis, I still used ATLAS.Ti for the purposes of data organisation and also to have an audit-trail on how the analysis was done for scrutiny by the research community.

The data analysis process is available as an appendix at the back of this thesis. There were similarities from the observational data; the data from documents; and from informal conversations. I first did an inductive making-of-meaning (Henning *et al.*, 2004:105) of the data and followed the steps of content analysis. After a description of the data, I interpreted the findings from the interpretive paradigm (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:168) - not forgetting the importance of context. This, then, led me to take the analysis a step further and to embark on the racial diversity discourse which the data was conveying. In discourse analysis, language is considered as more than just a reflection of reality. The language used and the meaning it has in a specific context becomes a very important element in discourse analysis (Henning *et al.*, 2004:3 & 4). My findings are presented in a narrative form and are about the meaning constructed from the language that presents the data (Henning *et al.*, 2004:31).

1.6 THE RESEARCH SITE: VAN DEN BERG HIGH SCHOOL

Van Den Berg High School was purposely selected for this inquiry - Van Den Berg is a pseudonym suggested to me by one of the learners at the school. It is a former Afrikaans medium Whites-only public high school in South Africa, named after one of the country's former statesman and an important figure in the life of the National Party, in general - and in the politics of apartheid, in particular. The school was established in 1937 as a "Laerskool" or Junior Secondary School with Grades 8 to 10. After a few years the school introduced its first Grade 12 class. In the 70 years of its existence, the school operated under three different names, including Van Den Berg.

This is the school where I carried out my research. Indeed, the school was an exception in a number of respects. I found an interesting contrast in the story of the school - as told by the school documents and the learners. The documents, especially the very negative letters that the school received from angry parents who could not hide their feelings against the incoming black learners, but the experiences of the learners were very different from the tone the letters from the white parents conveyed. Understandably, the documents tell the history of the school while the learners tell their contemporary experiences which do not necessarily reflect what used to be, but what is.

At the time of this research, besides the African learners the school had also enrolled learners from the coloured and the Indian communities – albeit such learners were in a minority. The white and African learners formed the majority of the school-going population. It is the former Whites-only schools that are facing the challenge of integration because black learners are looking for quality education (Pandor, 2004:14). Another interesting aspect is the fact that the school has retained its present name even after a referendum on a name change that was held in 1998 which suggested that the majority of parents and of the School Governing Body (12:1 to be exact) and the majority of learners voted for a name change.

This was the first high school to be established in this area of Pretoria. Changes started to occur at the school when most of the learners left in 1992 and 1993 because the

AWB was using the school as a political arena. The documents show an exodus of learners - whose parents did not belong to the Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB)⁸ - from this school to nearby Afrikaans medium schools.

The period 1992 and 1993 in the history of South Africa was a period of uncertainty for many people because it was just after 1989, the year in which F. W. de Klerk, the former State President, lifted the ban on the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and other political organisations and released political prisoners – followed by Nelson Mandela’s release in 1990 (Carrim, 1998: 7). In this specific school the principal, then, was clearly not happy with the political developments in the country and, consequently, there was a combination of anger and frustration amongst members of his particular political party.

The AWB could not find an audience anywhere, except at the school. The principal of the school started to invite a minister from his church to assemblies at the school where he openly criticised the National Party’s policies in favour of the AWB - to which he and the principal belonged. The principal used the school for his own party political purposes by openly canvassing support for it as and when it suited him.

Some of the parents who belonged to other political parties reported him to the Department of Education. Consequently, a disciplinary hearing was held whereupon the principal was warned never to repeat what he had done. He, then, raised the AWB flag at the school. He had very strong support from his political party. They started holding rallies on the school premises - about which the majority of the parent community were very unhappy, arguing that “the school was being turned into a political battlefield” (SJ (1)⁹: 34). As a demonstration of their disapproval, the majority of the parents began to remove their children from the school to other Afrikaans high schools that advocated the desire to stay ‘Afrikaans’ (Principal 1st Interview txt, 2004).

8 Africaner Resistance Movement- A party which consisted of Afrikaans speaking people who favoured apartheid and protected it against all odds.

9. The first School Journal which recorded daily events at the school from 1988 to 1993.

This step resulted in the reduction of learner numbers in this school, forcing the Department of Education to remove educators who were ‘in excess’ and place them in schools where they were needed. The present principal took over in 1994 when the school was in real chaos (Principal 1st interview). He was faced with two big challenges: to get more learners into the school and to win back the confidence of the parent community that had left the school. Most of the learners who remained at the school were children of the parents who supported the AWB. It is, therefore, not hard to imagine the uncertainty in which the new principal found himself when he took over the reins at the school.

Despite the challenges, this principal managed to receive an acknowledgement award from parliament. In 2004 the former national Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, acknowledged him in parliament as a pioneer of diversity management in this part of South Africa. However, despite the principal’s achievements - and in contrast to the transformation at this school - the school’s name has been retained. The school won an award for being a school that was most desegregated with the least racial problems. As Joyce (1990: 8) puts it, the man the school is named after, while he did not invent apartheid, “nevertheless managed to knit together the many existing threads of legal and social prejudice and created from them one of the most massive and coherent bodies of control legislation ever devised.”

During the time this research was carried out, the teaching personnel at Van Den Berg High School consisted of 34 white men and women and one African-American English Second Language expert from an American school on an exchange programme with Van Den Berg. Of the 34, 28 teachers’ salaries were paid by the Department of Education and the rest were paid by the School Governing Body. 19 of the 34 were male and 15 were female. Of the 19 male teachers, 11 were Afrikaans and 8 English; and of the 15 female teachers 8 were English. This 8 includes the African American English teacher who was the only black at the time of this research. In total there were 18 Afrikaans teachers and 16 English teachers. At the time of this study the school had 34% black learners - black as in of African descent - but no black educators from South Africa. This is not to suggest that only those from the same race are better positioned to assist their learners because that may be too simplistic an assumption to make, but having a staff population that is predominantly white in a school with a

sizable percentage of black learners sends different messages to the learners and, hence, the need to attend to the staff composition (Nkomo & Vandeyar *et al*, 2006).

The present principal is a middle-aged male from the Afrikaans community. Contrary to what one would expect, he accepted change and is also very innovative. He was determined to turn things around at this school when he took over in 1994 - obviously not a popular decision at that particular time. A month after he was appointed principal, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the President of the new South Africa. The principal removed the old South African flag and put up the new South African flag. The principal alleges that to protest against this move, the flag was taken down more than three times by unknown people who came during the night until he decided to put it up in the mornings and take it down again in the afternoons (Principal's 1st interview, 2004). Asked in an interview how he anticipated the future of this school, he acknowledged the challenges facing him and the country when he said: "Sadly, this country still has a long way to go." This comment is very similar to that of Mary Winston - a 73 year old lifelong resident of Detroit, a city with the second largest black majority in America - who responded in an interview about the September 11¹⁰ incident in the US: "We're all Americans, but we have got a long way to go" (The Detroit News, 2005).

After the South African Schools Act, Act No.84 Of 1996 came into effect, every school in the country had to enrol learners from all racial groups. Van Den Berg High School was no exception and, therefore, also had to enrol black learners in order to retain the good educators in the school. This move was, however, not its first choice. It was made after many other alternatives by the School Governing Body of the time had failed with a number of initiatives to keep the school white and Afrikaans. When everything else had failed, at the beginning of 1996, the school changed its language policy from Afrikaans only to both Afrikaans and English and then invited applications from the black learners in the nearby townships. This move turned things around for the school. Presently, the school is not able to cope with the number of applications they receive every year and they have to turn some learners away.

10. On 11 September 2001 in the US the Pentagon in Washington and the two twin towers in New York were attacked by terrorists who had hijacked aeroplanes and had flown them into the buildings - destroying themselves and also killing many people in the process.

The principal at the time of this inquiry was concerned that the school may be resegregated in the years to come - as in the US (Kozol, 2005; Orfield, 2004) - if the black parents do not move into the school area. The Provincial Department of Education, with its feeder zone admission scheme, give zones to schools and provides them with a list of areas from which they should admit learners. According to the principal, this “will reverse the gains that this school has made in terms of integrating learners from diverse backgrounds in many other ways.” This practice was also used in the US and it led to the segregation of schools that were desegregated. Mickleson (2004) refers to the practice in the USA as “zoning” which, she maintains, stops more learners from the minority groups outside the area gaining access to the suburban schools. By zoning schools, the South African government is responding to a concern about township schools which are gradually becoming white elephants due to the migration of learners to suburban schools (Sekete *et al*, 2001: 45).

The school - with 843 learners in 2004 - is desegregated and has adopted a parallel medium of instruction. The learners come from all four main racial groups, with white learners in the majority of 43%, African learners at 34%, Coloured learners at 2.8%, Indian learners at 1.2% and the balance of the learners coming from outside the country. Learners from outside South Africa also contribute to the diversity of learners in this school and although there are only a few of them, they include learners from Pakistan, China, Australia, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. This, then, makes the school diverse in many other ways – hence, the relevance of this inquiry to determine how the learners understand and experience this diversity. Special reference is made in this study to racial diversity in the school as one aspect of transformation.

Most of the learners are from Gauteng Province. Some of the other learners commute from as far afield as Mpumalanga and North West Provinces, while others travel over 150 kilometres every morning and afternoon to reach Van Den Berg High School. The parents of these learners pay the ever-escalating costs of this travelling which is over and above the school fees. I acknowledge desegregation that has taken place in other schools and in other forms, as in formerly exclusive Indian schools and in former exclusively Coloured schools. One should understand that the process of desegregation in the South African context meant that African learners moved into a space that once

'belonged' to Indian, White and Coloured learners, but the opposite was never the case. I reflected on learners' understandings of desegregation and integration in practice, while I also understood how participation in school activities and practices on a daily basis impacts on their overall experiences.

A total of 16 learners were purposely sampled in terms of diversity and studied in depth. Their diversity included gender, class, grades, race, capabilities and disabilities. I, then, began with the observation of these learners in the midst of others in their classrooms. I concluded the interviews and observations in the fourth term of 2004. A relationship of trust was established with the learners who were involved in my study, with the principal of the school and with most of the educators. I have visited learners at their homes who have friends from other racial groups to observe how they interact and get along (Higson *et al*, 1995: 118-205). The home visits continued in the first school term of 2005.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is difficult for a South African resident who has been adversely affected by the system of separate development in general and in education in particular, to speak and/or write about diversity in education with the same degree of detachment which he/she would, otherwise bring to writing about e.g. birds in South Africa. Who I am matters more in this type of study. I am an African woman in South Africa. I was directly and adversely affected by the system of Bantu Education. I attended rural schools and qualified at one of the - so called - 'bush' universities. It was a challenging process to write about school desegregation in South Africa, especially in the former white school among white staff members and multiracial learners. Another danger is that when a person studies a contemporary issue, such as racial integration in South African schools - which many people may be reluctant to discuss, the amount of information one may get may be limited compared to what one would get when studying a different topic. It needs to be treated with the consideration that suits its sensitivity.

Another issue - which is one of the aspects of qualitative research - is researcher bias. Researcher bias has led to the view that qualitative research is subjective rather than objective. According to Ratner (2002:69), some qualitative researchers believe that one cannot be both objective and subjective while others believe that the two can coexist and that one's subjectivity can facilitate the understanding of the world of others. What I have done to reduce this subjectivity is to reflect on my possible biases. I could step back and recognise my biases that distorted my understanding. The above researcher bias is closely related to another challenge which is “the ability to keep an open mind” - as Gillham (2000: 18) puts it. This, basically, addresses the problem of pre-knowledge and assumptions. Even if you ‘know’ what is going on in the setting, you have to act as if you did not because you actually do not know it. I had to keep an open mind every time I was at the school – which, I agree, was difficult because of the fact that as human beings we usually feel that we are compelled to understand and to make sense of what we are investigating.

Our interpretation of new knowledge in terms of what we already know can be avoided (Gillham 2000:18; Stenhouse, 1985: 211) by concentrating on the ‘qualitative element’ of the research. This involves finding out how people understand themselves or their context; finding out what lies behind the objective evidence; finding out the reasons for your results, for example, people’s feelings, perceptions and experiences of what is going on.

To overcome these limitations, during this research process I was employed on a part-time basis at a research centre, at the University of Pretoria, amongst mostly white South African researchers. I frequently requested them to read and critique my work, and to look, specifically, for subjectivity in the study. This process assisted me to eliminate researcher bias. In this way, I respected the learners’ perspectives by using a variety of methods to ensure that what I thought they said, in fact, matched their understanding. My problem was that I spent too much time attempting to keep my own feelings and personal reactions out of the study - which I later realised I could not do. Ultimately, I decided that there was relevance in what I felt about desegregation that cannot be avoided. I, thus, made the decision to reflect and reveal those feelings (Ratner, 2002: 69).

The other limitation is the effect that cultural and gender differences bring to the setting. I am an African female and my participants were learners from all four major race groups of South Africa. The influence of culture and gender emerged very strongly during the interviews.

The research did not include all the learners of the school - which limited the amount of information I could have obtained had I involved everyone. I acknowledge that because the research was only done on a portion of the population about whom I wished to make statements, I cannot expect the findings to be precisely the same as if the whole population were studied (Rist, 1980:115). One can, nevertheless, argue that the smaller the sample, the better the chances are of accurate supervision and record keeping - with a smaller chance of mistakes being made (Gay *et al.*, 2000:175).

1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

One school in a district in the Gauteng Province was studied. I had to delimit my study to a certain area to make it manageable, so I decided on an ethnographic study of learners in one school to answer my main research question and related sub-questions. The key point in a case study is specificity. In human behaviour, generalisations made from one group of people to others - or one institution to the other - are often suspect. This is because there are too many elements that are specific to groups, such as what is true about one school may well not be true about others (Gillham, 2000:6, Mouton, 1996: 27). That is why I did not aim for generalisations. I, nevertheless, think that the findings, recommendations and conclusions can be used as guidelines in other settings which are similar to the one where the study was conducted. I embarked on a case study which is a detailed investigation of learners in one school. I have, therefore, attempted to analyse the themes that are important to desegregation (Polit and Hungler, 1983:23).

I acknowledge the desegregation that has taken place in former Coloureds-only and former Indians-only schools, but those did not form part of this study. However, since the school that I studied enrolled learners from those communities, those learners were

purposely sampled for my research as well because I wanted information from diverse backgrounds. The Department of Education's Norms and Standards for Funding Schools was used as a guide to choose amongst different categories of schools in terms of resources. This school enrolls learners from diverse communities in terms of social class, economic background, language and racial group.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study by highlighting the rationale and context of the study, the research question, the design and the methodology. It further introduces the purpose of the study; its contribution to knowledge; and the main argument on which the study evolves. An overview of the study is given in this chapter as well.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature. This chapter has three main parts; the first part places the study within the debates on race and racism, the second part deals with the history of segregation and desegregation in the South African context while the last part reviews both the local and international literature on diversity and school desegregation. The chapter therefore situates this study within the realm of the broader debates on school integration. It is in this chapter where the theoretical underpinnings of the study are highlighted.

Chapter 3 addresses the qualitative research approach and how it correlates with the social constructivist paradigm of my study. Further, the chapter discusses the research design and methodology embarked on in this study. It explains - in detail - which research design was utilised and why. It goes on to explain the data collection methods and why I embarked on those and also why I selected a specific order. Different types of purposive sampling in qualitative research are discussed and the reasons why I chose critical cases purposive sampling in this study and why I did not - and could not - sample in any other manner.

Both Chapters 4 and 5 address the data analyses. To adhere to ethical requirements, the names I use are not the real names of people or the original names which appeared

on documents. I have used pseudonyms for all participants and names referred to in school journals and letters throughout this thesis. It is, therefore, in these chapters that the data is analysed and discussed. Chapter 4 concentrates on the processes that led to desegregation and earlier events in the school after it was desegregated. Chapter 5 concentrates on the school as it was at the moment this research was carried out, and how the learners perceived it. Evidence, in the form of raw data from school documents, is included to support the statements that are made. Reference is also made to the original interview data - as exported from ATLAS.Ti.

Chapter 6 concludes the study. The conclusions drawn from the data - together with the conclusions of the study - are found in this chapter. I, then, also discuss recommendations - using the findings from Chapters 4 and 5.