

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF SELECTED SAMPLE OF EMPIRICAL DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three focused on the design of the research instrument and empirical investigation. It also focused on the questions relevant to the influence of learner and educator interaction in multicultural schools. The sample utilised similar to multicultural secondary schools in Johannesburg – district eleven. It will also resemble similar schools in this province and probably also in the rest of the country. Chapter four will describe how data was collected and interpreted. This is done as a report on observations; individual and focus-group interviews which were conducted.

It is important to note that the observations will be included in the data from the interviews. This chapter will then give attention to the aspects listed below.

- The first is the background of the study which includes:
 - educators perception about multicultural schools;
 - understanding multiculturalism;
 - the influence of multiculturalism relations and interaction in the schools;
and
 - activities focusing on multiculturalism and focus group perspectives.

- The second is learners' perception about multiculturalism which includes:
 - understanding multiculturalism;
 - the influence of multiculturalism on the relations and interaction in the schools; and
 - activities focusing on multiculturalism and focus group perspectives.

4.2 EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MULTICULTURAL INTERACTION (SCHOOL A + B INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS)

4.2.1 Understanding multiculturalism and culture

I have clearly indicated in chapter three that in school A only female educators were involved in the interview processes and in school B only males. In both schools the understanding of multiculturalism is that multicultural schools involve learners and the educators from different racial and cultural backgrounds. In answering the question: *What do you understand by a multicultural school?* Educator A, B and C in both schools responded in almost the same way and said: "It is a school that has stakeholders coming from different cultural backgrounds."

My observations confirmed what was said by educators in both schools because I have seen learners, as well as educators of different racial groups, which means they came from different cultural backgrounds. The common response and the understanding of the question by educators from both schools was: **"different cultural backgrounds"**.

I again posed a question: *How many cultures do you have in your school?* In response, the educator B who was a Black female in school A said: "there are learners and educators coming from four different racial groups which means

when talking about culture, we are specifically referring to culture of four racial groups found here at schools, namely, whites, blacks, Indians and coloureds.”

Subsequent to the above question, I asked: *What do you understand by the term “culture?”* Educator A, B and C in both schools had more or less the same ideology on the concept mentioned above and said: “culture refers to a lifestyle which a particular community practise on a daily basis, this include standards, norms and values of that particular community.” From the educators’ perspective, it is understood that the term “culture” has to do with the common behaviour of a particular society which is practised on a daily basis. This response is supported by the literature in chapter two when Mead, cited in Sewlall (1996:15), points out that, “the term culture applied to the total shared, learned behaviour of society.”

4.2.2 The influence of multiculturalism on the relations and interaction in the school

Multiculturalism can have an influence on the relations and interaction in the school in many ways. For me to know exactly how does that happen in school A and B and also to gather more data on what is being studied I had to ask a question. *What do you think is the influence of multiculturalism on your relationship with the learners in your class?* Educators in both schools stated that, “we understand each other well and that the relationship grows” Curiously I asked: *How do you understand each other well and make the relationship grow?* Common responses were provided and were closely related to the religions of educators. One said: “The culture of my religion (namely, Islam) allows me to knock-off at eleven o’clock on Fridays for prayer meetings at church.” The educator B who is a Black female at school A said. “I normally attend Women Fellowship at church (Presbyterian) every Thursday which compels me to leave school at ten o’clock.” Each stated that the process of learning to know each other well and to make the relationship grow emanates from the fact that when

such times come, learners know they should be in their classes and concentrate in the work given. The following day the educator marks the work done previous day without any problem being experienced by the learners.

The Department of Education makes it clear that ...”Various religious traditions should be presented objectively and neutrally as part of a secular programme of education. The object is to educate learners about a variety of religious traditions, not to indoctrinate them into any tradition.

Planning for educators and administrative support staff’s absenteeism due to religious holidays/festivals must be completed by the end of the previous academic year and submitted to the District Senior Manager. Where religious holidays/festivals will result in large numbers of learners and educators being absent from school on a particular day, the school may consider closing the school for that specific day (Department of Education, circular 67/2002; Guidelines on the handling of issues of religion in Public Schools in Gauteng).

In addition, educator B informed me that: “Here at school we have our assembly on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10h20 to 10h40. We have a special time-table of educators conducting assembly. The educator who conducts the assembly first reads the Bible in English and explains briefly what the text was all about and thereafter asks learners to sing the National Anthem before announcements, if there are any.” The educator B who was a male in school B responded the same way but mentioned only three racial groups, namely: whites, blacks and coloured.

In my observations in school A, I attended the assembly with the educator B. It was touching to see the way in which learners sung the National Anthem (which first started with Zulu followed by a South Sotho stanza then English and the last one in Afrikaans). What the educator B told me about how they conduct their assembly was exactly the same as what I have observed.

I listened to the way learners from other racial groups (except Blacks) pronounced lyrics in Zulu, and also listened and observed Blacks when they sang and pronounced lyrics in Afrikaans and in English. My observation was that their differences in culture did not make any difference when they (learners and educators) were at the assembly. They all sang with enthusiasm.

Coming to learners, the male educator C in School B who is a coloured said: "There are some learners who when they are sick must be taken to traditional healers for their ailments, that I cannot hide because educators and the principal know about such incidents. Such learners absent themselves whenever the time comes for treatment. Some bring their traditional medicine to school in small bottles and when a person asks to go and drink outside, as an educator, I do understand and let him/her go. Such understanding between learners and educators makes the relationship grow. When there are deaths at home, the culture of some learners compels them to be away from school until the time of bereavement is over. These are norms and values which other cultures have here at school. By simply learning about these cultures, the relationship grows."

The only exception to the response stated above with regard the question posed, (namely, What do you think is the influence of multiculturalism on your relationship with the learners in your class?) come from the white female educator A in school A who responded to the question by saying: "I do not see colour, I do not see culture, I do not see anything, but I teach." A clear interpretation of this response will be provided in chapter five.

Observing individual educators in both schools when presenting lessons, I could see that there was something in common which was mutual acceptance and understanding of individuals and their cultures. In my observations, I saw a black boy-learner coming to a white female educator C in school A to borrow an English dictionary which was placed at the window. When the educator took and gave the dictionary to the learner, before the learner could take the dictionary, he

first clapped hands and half knelt-down and later took the dictionary and went back to his seat. I was amazed not to hear the educator saying anything about that action, but later I realised that the educator understood the learner well. In African culture, the boy-learner was actually saying “thank you”. I then began to understand what the black female educator B in school A had meant earlier on when she said: “We understand each other well and so the relationship grows.”

The proceeding question was: *How do learners interact among themselves within and outside the classrooms?* The responses to this question seemed to be more or less the same, and each educator said: “In class I make learners sit in mix-racial groups so that they can share and exchange ideas together, befriend people easily so that they can also know one another better. This structured seating makes them discuss things freely with the peers of different races.” The response was with regard to the interaction between themselves within the classrooms. Outside the classrooms what I have observed was that learners group themselves according to peer class-mates with mixed-race when they enjoy their lunch-boxes during break times and also when playing football together. Watching learners of the same multicultural school (especially school A) in Johannesburg and their involvement in sports was an interesting moment to me. Multiculturalism influenced the relations and the interaction outside the classrooms positively due to the fact that learners were enjoying being together regardless of culture. That attitude promoted effective learning in different sports activities such as, for example, tennis, soccer, netball and so forth. The above-mentioned observations apply to school A in particular.

In school B, learners were structurally seated, as in school A and the relations and interaction were effectively promoted by way of working together in class, but outside the classrooms what I observed was that the majority of learners preferred to group themselves according to their races, only the minority grouped themselves as in the classrooms that is, in mix races. This study therefore, concludes that multicultural schools there should be a uniformity with regard to

the relations and in the interaction between learners and the educators in all the schools. I also observed that in school B learners shared or became involved in a particular sports activity according to their friendship.

What surprised me in both schools (A and B) was that when it came to rugby, white learners predominated. In school A I saw three black boys playing rugby and in school B I saw only two. For interest sake I asked. Why is this sport dominated by white learners? There was a common response from the educator participants of both schools that: "Most learners (except whites) seem not to be interested in this sport and we cannot force them to play it, because everyone has to choose and play a sport which fits in with his/her own interests." That was what I observed about learner interaction among themselves outside the classrooms.

My observations also identified obedience and respect by learners to their educators. The literature in chapter two makes it clear in Table 2.1, which reflects the differences between small and large power distance in societies. On the large power distance it is stated by Hofstede (1991:27) that, "the students treat teachers (educators) with respect, and parents teach children obedience." This means parents from different societal groups teach their children obedience which goes hand in hand with culture. When one looks at Table 2.1 (p.6) there are imbalances in the dimension of culture hence, the inequality in society and inequality in organisations. These imbalances took place and were implemented by those who were in authority in societies nor organisation before April 1994. however, since the new dispensation after April 1994, the education system introduced a new perspective and was termed 'a critical multicultural education'. This enables learners in multicultural schools to interact effectively among themselves within and outside the classrooms.

Still on the influence of multiculturalism on the relations and interaction in the school, I posed the question: *Does your relationship with learners in class*

influence the climate and learner involvement? How? The most common response to the question was: "Giving them the same love, treatment in class create a climate which always promotes active learner involvement." O yes, I can see white learners, blacks, coloureds and Indians showing their interest in the subject (i.e. IsiZulu) wanting to know more about the subject by asking questions which make the climate conducive for effective teaching and learning."

During the time of my observations, I was moved by the positive attitude which learners of colour had (i.e. whites and coloured) when asking questions wanting to know more about what they do not understand in the subject of IsiZulu. They were trying to communicate in Zulu, although the accent was not perfect (like of a Zulu speaking person) but they were trying their best. I also observed that their enthusiasm in their schoolwork influenced the classroom and school climate in a very positive manner. In school B the white and coloured educators responded to the above question and said: "The climate here at school is welcoming because learners and educators do work together in harmony in that learner involvement is encouraged."

My observation in school B was that, even though the educators responded that way, I could see some learners were restless and noisy in class. The educator kept on saying; "Keep quiet please." The educators had already voiced their understanding of what the term 'culture' means and also explained in the study that they no longer celebrate 'cultural' and 'heritage' days due to the reasons provided, which will reflect later in the study. The question was: *How do the two above-mentioned days influence the interaction among learners and the educators?* This question will be answered under the next sub-heading.

4.2.3 Activities focusing on multiculturalism and focus-group perspectives

For me to understand how multiculturalism influences the interaction and the relations between the learner and the educator, I have to know the activities

which the stakeholders participate in and I asked: *Do you often involve learners in discussions based on multicultural issues? If yes, how?*

The white female educator A in School A responded. "No, I neither teach nor involve them in such discussions because I have never found it necessary to talk about it." The responses from other educator-participants (B and C) on this question were similar to each other. They said: "Yes, by making each learner to come to the front and explain to the classmates how they celebrate their cultural feasts and deaths, other ask questions where they do not clearly understand."

During the time of my visit in both schools, I did not hear learners discussing their cultures but I was shown books where they wrote about that, which confirmed what the educators have told me. According to what I have read from the learners' books, I think multiculturalism has broadened their minds about cultural diversity.

Subsequent to the above question, I asked: *Do you teach your learners different cultures? If yes, mention a few that are found at school.* In response, the White female educator A in school A answered briefly and said: "No". The black female educator B in school A responded: "We have four different race groups here at school namely, whites, blacks, coloured and Indians.

"Yes, I do teach my learners about different cultures. For example, we have what we call 'French club' here at school where I make them (learners) cook food which is cooked and enjoyed by people from different cultural groups on daily basis like for example, 'masonja' – these are 'worms' enjoyed most by the "Northern Sotho" and the "Tsonga" speaking people. They eat these worms with porridge. Learners who have never seen 'masonja' (worms) were very much interested in seeing how they looked like and also to see how they were cooked."

Three male educators (black, coloured and white) in school B produced similar responses to the question and said: "There are three different racial groups found at school, namely, coloured, blacks and whites. Yes, I teach learners about different cultures because I want to make them understand cultural diversity. I have pictures of people belonging to different cultural groups on the walls of my classroom to remind them (the learners) of different cultures."

In my observation I saw classes (those which I was placed in) with pictures on the walls displaying people from different cultural groups in their traditional dress. To me that indicated that indeed learners at school B are being taught about cultural diversity.

It must be noted that with the White female educator A in school A there was nothing to discuss further as she limited her reply to "No". It is for such reasons that Lynch, cited in Richard (2003:45), identified two major goals for schools and says: "These are social cohesion and cultural diversity, without social cohesion society may disintegrate and without diversity 'alienation' and 'discontent' may result. The idea is to reconcile the two goals so that schools propagate both social cohesion as well as diversity."

To gather more data on the topic, I asked: *What activities (in and outside the classroom) do you find interesting to all learners?* The white female educator A in school A said: "In our school we have Valentines Day which is something you have to experience, we do not have school day, we have the whole day of fun, the whole day programme, learners enjoy it. On Valentine's Day learners carry plastic bags selling sweets to try and make money. We go to children's homes and the informal settlement to deliver food and clothes. That is why we have these monies to provide lunch to learners who cannot afford here at school. In May we have a fashion show where the learners have to sing. They have different designs and designers and they have shoes that they cut. Such activities become a great fun and are usually done over three evenings (i.e.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday). Learners also choose a male and female model of the year and the best actor. In September learners dress in white and ask for contributions from outside societies”.

The black female educator B in school A in responding to the question of activities said: “The activities which I find interesting to all learners are music and dance.” The common response from educators in both schools with regard to the above mentioned question was: “Inside the classrooms learners enjoy discussions and reading. Outside the classrooms they enjoy playing and sharing their lunch-boxes together during lunch breaks/play-times.” That is what I observed during the time of my visit.

In my observation I could see that the attitude towards multiculturalism is positive especially in class and therefore influences the relationship between learners and the educators in a positive manner. Foster (1990:38) confirms my observations and writes that multicultural education is a “whole curriculum which also involves an attitude to life.”

In my interviews with educators in school A and B, I continued with questions and I asked: *Do you and your learners normally celebrate cultural and heritage days? If yes, how and why?* The white female educator A in school A said: “We have on Fridays a “Hindu day” I eat Hindu food and ask all who belong to that religion to tell me what Hinduism is all about.” The Black female educator B in school A said: “We no longer celebrate cultural day, we have stopped because some white learners used to laugh at blacks (namely, Zulus) in their traditional dress. Rather, we have changed ‘cultural day’ into a concert at night where learners are asked to cook and sell different kinds of food which are preferred by their cultures like that one of ‘masonja’ (worms), They demonstrate to the audience how they cook indigenous types of food and later give audience a chance to taste and commend on how the food tastes.” The literature in chapter two confirms that

“multiculturalism is not only taught through formal lessons but must be demonstrated at all times” (Marulis, 2000:27).

I tried to ask the above-mentioned black female educator B in school A whether the laughter by white learners was in a positive or negative mood, and was that why the school stopped that? She said: “the laughter (by white learners) was negative because they would laugh when they saw Zulu learners in their animal-skin clothes which they call mabheshu in Zulu. They would laugh (white learners) and say Zulu learners are going around naked. The laughter would continue for five or more days. I say the laughter was created in a negative impression because we, as educators have received complaints from Learner Representative Council (LRC) about this. At first we (educators) thought the laughter emanated from the entertainment, but later after we received complaints we realised that it was perceived by learners the other way round.” The white female educator C in school A explained and said, “Before we stopped activities on cultural day, we sat down and agree that to avoid conflict among learners of the same school, celebrations of that nature should be cancelled. Rather, let them celebrate such a day by having the educators choose learners who will each recite on a concert a poem (s) in his/her language and later tell the audience what the poem was all about.”

The cancellation of such a day may make them feel inferior and unimportant. That action is confirmed by literature which explains alienation the following way: “The experience of feeling one’s culture unwelcome, one’s ethnicity acknowledged, and one’s tradition unimportant” (Duarte & Smith, 2000:173).

With school B all the three educators gave the same response and said. “Here at school we do not celebrate ‘cultural’ and ‘heritage’ days as we did not include in our school curriculum.” A follow-up question was asked. *Do you feel satisfied with that?* The response by the male educator A, B and C was common and they said: “Yes, because I do not see any necessity to include them (days) in the

curriculum, but I continue to teach.” Lynch (1989); Banks (1997); Bennette (1996); Nieto, (1992) cited in Richard (2003:47) argue that: “the multicultural approach is not separate from critical pedagogy. This is a very important point and if educators develop and encourage critical thinking will automatically introduce reflection and diversity within the curriculum.”

After such a thorough focus on activities on multiculturalism I then asked: *How do the two above-mentioned days influence the interaction among learners as well as educators?* The white female educator A in school A responded: “The above-mentioned days influenced the interaction among learners and educators in a negative way and caused conflict in the past within the school environment (conflict among learners). The white female educator C in school A said: “since we have changed or stopped the celebrations on ‘cultural days’ and resorted to another method of utilising that day in a different manner, everyone (especially learners) enjoys it, in that the interaction among learners and the educators is influenced positively.”

In my observations in school A I was not aware that there had once been a conflict among learners which emanated from the celebration of a ‘cultural day’ because what I saw was a welcoming climate in and outside the classrooms. This means the changing of the curriculum concerning such activities brought about change of attitude among learners. Everyone now accepts and understand that multicultural education is a “whole curriculum which involves an attitude to life” (Foster, 1990:38). In school B the response from the educator A, B and C seemed to be the same and they said “The above-mentioned days do not have any influence because they are not included in the curriculum, therefore we do not celebrate with learners at school”. The literature in chapter two identifies the argument expressed by Foster (1990:21) when he says; “all pupils need to acquire knowledge and sensitivity to their cultural groups through a curriculum which offers opportunities to study other religions, languages and cultures...”

Due to the above-mentioned responses, this study concludes that this white male educator does not have confidence in the black and coloured learners' intelligence and that there is a chance that they will not mark white learners fairly. His attitude towards black and coloured learners leads him to the practise of racism which is discredited by the new South African Constitution. Nieto, (1992:1) in chapter two argues that no educational philosophy or programme is worthwhile unless it focuses on two primary concerns which are:

- raising the achievement of all students and thus providing them with an equal and equitable education; and
- giving students the opportunity to become critical and productive members of democratic society.

4.3 LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MULTICULTURAL INTERACTION (SCHOOLS A AND B INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS)

4.3.1 Understanding multiculturalism

Learners in school A and B seemed to have the same understanding on multiculturalism that it has to do with different cultural practises which have to be accepted and affirmed by all parties involved. The following response came from the learners interviewed when this question was posed to them: *What do you understand by a multicultural school?* The common response from the learner A,B,C and D of both school A and B was: "a multicultural school is a school where different races; different culture; traditions and religions come together as stakeholders of the same school. The exception to this was one learner (white) C of school A who responded passively and said: "I do not understand".

In order for me to see how do learners understand multiculturalism, I asked the following question. *Does your school as a multicultural school have a welcoming*

climate for: all stakeholders of different cultures? Two white boy-learners (A and B) of school A responded: “The school has a welcoming climate for all stakeholders of different cultures because at school we respect one another as well as his/her culture. The respect for one’s culture makes us as learners to learn the culture of other stakeholders with ease and we really enjoy that, but sometimes the climate in our school become unwelcoming because of few mischievous learners who normally smoke and drink liquor within the school premises and when they are caught by the ‘prefects’ they cause chaos which makes the climate unwelcoming.”

Following the above-mentioned responses I asked: *Who are those learners?* They said: “They are boys and girls of mixed racial groups but there are not more than fifty of them.” I again asked: *How does the school address this matter?* “The educators punish those learners by putting them on detention after school to clean the school environment, scrub the toilets for three weeks and thereafter the detention is over.” *Do their parents know about their children’s behaviour at school?* The response from boy-learner A was: “I do not know”, white boy-learner B said. “Yes, their parents know.” Another question was. *Do those learners still continue even after their parents having been notified?* The response was. “Yes, they still continue.”

Two Black girl-learners (C and D) at school A and two Black boy-learners (C+D) of school B responded to the question of a welcoming school climate by saying: “The climate at school is welcoming because everyone who enters the gate receive a warm welcome from the educators and learners, no one feels like a stranger.” These learners never mentioned the mischievous behaviour of their peers but following the above information gathered from other learners earlier on I asked: *Do you experience the situations where learners here at school abuse substances such as drugs and liquor?* The response was: “Yes, we do but there are very few of those.”

These responses were ironical to those provided by the educators in both schools who never mentioned anything concerning mischievous behaviour of learners on substance abuse. Such information would have been provided to answer this question: *Does your relationship with learners in class influence the climate and learner involvement?* (see p.11). It must be noted that I only described what I observed in both schools concerning the above question. The hidden information which I was not told about, I could not include in my report.

Coming back to what learners have said above during my visit in school B, I saw learners (mixed racial groups – but coloured boys and girls were in the majority) cleaning the school yard and toilets after school. When I asked one educator outside he said: “I am sure they are being punished for not having done their school work.” Then I believed what he told me.

4.3.2 The influence of multiculturalism on the relations and interaction in the school

In my interview with learners I wanted to find out whether learners do understand how multiculturalism influences the relations and the interaction in the school and I asked a question. *What do you think is the influence of multiculturalism on your relationship with educators in your class?* The common response from the learners A,B,C, of both schools was: “Being in a multicultural school has taught me to learn more about different cultural backgrounds, our educators accept us as we are and they learn about our cultures from us.” The white boy-learner D in school B said: “The influence is because we love and respect our educators.”

The school as an organisation accepts learners as they are and introduces them its culture to them by way of familiarising them (learners) with school policy, so that even though learners are from different societies, but at school they must speak the same language and behave the same way. Literature by Lynch in

Richard (2003:68) says “policy must be implemented so that every one at school speaks the same language.”

Another question was posed to learners: *What do you think is the influence of multiculturalism on the relationship with learners in-and outside the classrooms?* The common response from learners in both school A and B was as follows: “The influence of multiculturalism on the relationship is that we, as learners, have an open communication among ourselves, our interaction as learners is focused on school work and team spirit; outside the classroom we interact in a formal and informal sport activities.”

Open communication which was mentioned by learners of both school influences the relations and interaction among learners of different racial and cultural groups, by working together in class and playing formally and informally outside the classroom. The literature states clearly that “multicultural education is ongoing and dynamic. It is a process because it is about building the relationships” (Richard, 2003:47).

If the relationship is good between learners as the responses have indicated, it is also important to know about the influence on the climate in the classrooms/schools and I asked: *How do multicultural situations influence the climate in the classrooms/schools?* The black girl-learner A (who is a prefect grade 12) in school A responded. “Every single school has its problems, we also have problems with learners in different grade levels which we prefects normally shelve.” The question: *Why shelve problems?* The answer: “We sometimes feel as prefects that the more problems we report to our educators, the more time we will spend outside the classrooms trying to resolve such problems, so the best thing to do is to put aside the problem. The problems which we cannot shelve which influence the climate of the school in negative way are those which involve fights and name-calling which happened last year and never again.” I wanted to know more about the fighting problem and I asked. *What did your educators say*

about these fights and name-calling and what stopped all that? (Never again). She responded: “The educators together with the principal called the parents of boys who were fighting (white & black) and related the matter to the parents and promised to expel them if they did not change their behaviour. Those boys were suspended from class and were given tasks to do outside the classrooms for a week and came back to class. Since then (2003 to date) (that type of problem) we have never experienced again”.

The ironical part of the whole set up in school A, was that the white boy-learner and the black boy-learner B and C (not prefects) responded to the above question asked together with the learner A, B, C in school B by saying: “The climate in the classrooms is warm and inviting for learner involvement. Outside the classrooms, the situations influence the climate in the sense that we participate in different sport activities and enjoy sharing the sport together as in the classrooms.

My observations confirmed what the black girl-learner A in school A mentioned when she said: “every single school has got its problems.” When one black boy-learner threw a paper through the window where I was standing he ended up in the principal’s office together with his mother. I was called so that the learner could apologise to the subject educator B (of IsiZulu) and to me as well as in front of his mother. These are some of the problems which are found in multicultural schools in Johannesburg, which and if shelved, can cause more problems and hinder the relationship and the interaction between learners and the educators, and can also influence the climate in the classrooms and the school as a whole in a negative manner.

To gather more information on the topic which revolved around the “learner and educator interaction in multicultural schools”, I continued to ask questions such as: *Does your educator treat learners from different cultures differently?* The common response from learners A, B, C of both schools was: “Our educators

give us love and care the same way regardless of the colour of our skin.” My observations did not identify any discrimination on the part of the educators. What I have observed was love which the educators gave their learners. I realised that to the educators all learners are important.

Subsequently I asked: *Do learners from different cultures treat each other differently?* All of them from both schools said: “No, we love one another and learn about different cultural backgrounds.” This common response confirmed what the educators had told me.

In my observations in school A and B, the same learners whom I saw seated together in class, I would still see them being together even outside the classrooms. I could see the understanding of one’s culture and the acceptance of one’s colour of skin. I would only see few learners of the same skin colour standing together outside the classrooms during break, but the majority were always mixed just as in the classrooms.

4.3.3 Activities focusing on multiculturalism and focus-group perspective

The learner and educator interactions in multicultural schools also include the activities taking place in such schools and for that reason I asked: *Do you normally celebrate ‘cultural’ and ‘heritage’ days in your school? How and why?* A white boy-learner A of school A responded. “Before yes, we used to celebrate, but since 2003 our educators stopped that and introduced a concert in the place of “cultural day”. Following this information I asked: *Why did your educators stop you from celebrating the cultural day?* He answered: “There were few naughty white boy learners who used to laugh at the black boy-learners who when wearing their traditional dress made of animal skin. The laughter provoked conflict and ended in the principal’s office and later we were told such celebrations would be cancelled.” I continued to ask. *What happened to those*

white boy-learners? In what grade level were they? And where are they presently?

In response he said: "The principal called their parents to school and related what transpired at school after the celebration of cultural day; The white boy-learners (culprits) were in grade ten by then (2003), but they are still at school doing grade twelve and one of them is a perfect."

A black boy-learner B of school A responded to the question and said. "Not exactly, but people who believe in a Hindu culture, have got this other celebration. Their Christmas is before ours so, they are given time off from school even though it is exam time educators let them go to celebrate their Christmas." The learner C of school A and the learner A, B, C of school B responded to the question briefly and said. "No, no, we do not do that."

My interviews with learners in both schools (A & B) confirmed what the educators had mentioned earlier on when I had interviews with them. For example, in school A, a White female educator talked about a "Hindu day" which was mentioned by a learner above. The black female educator B in school A made mention on how "cultural day" was cancelled at school which is something one of the learners in school A had mentioned. The learner C of school A and the learner A, B and C of school B answered that they did not celebrate such days at their school which was what their educators had mentioned of (see pg.6).

At school A something like a "concert" has replaced the "cultural day" whereby some activities are done, but in school B they do not celebrate cultural day at all according to the data gathered from the respondents. This suggests that culture of the stakeholders is not acknowledge nor important, as described by Duarte and Smith (2003:173): "the experience of feeling one's culture unwelcome, one's ethnicity unacknowledged and one's traditions unimportant."

The critical multicultural education in a new perspective allows educators to expand their curriculum to satisfy the needs of its stakeholders and the demands of the communities. Educators should therefore be flexible and introduce another kinds of activities which would substitute the dress-code on cultural days to avoid conflict among learners which was caused by laughter (white boy learners). As a multicultural school, each learner should benefit and be quipped with cultural diversities (especially those found at school) so that stakeholders understand each other better, as mentioned above by the interviewees. School A did the right thing to replace the cultural day, but school B which does not celebrate the day at all, should start to expand their curriculum and include such days. Educators and learners will have a broader knowledge with regard to different cultures found at school, as some cultures are coherent and interconnected because “human rights principles provide a solid moral base and coherence and interconnection for a global multicultural curriculum” (Lynch, 1989 cited in Richard, 2003: 45).

I continued with the interviews and I asked: *How do these two abovementioned days influence the interaction among learners and educators?* The white boy learner A of school A said: “At first the interaction among learners and educators was negative because of what other white boy learners would do or comment after the celebration of such days, but since the matter has been settled, the interaction is being influenced in a positive manner because on that day (i.e. concert day) we learn more about different cultures.” Learners A, B, C of school B responded in a similar and said: “The interaction among learners and educators remains the same (positive) but it is not influenced by those days because at school we do not celebrate such days. To us they are normal school days.”

Another question was posed: *Do your educators educate you on different cultures? If yes, mention all cultures you have at school.* The learner A, B of school A responded and said: “When we were doing grade 8 and 9 there was

'Life Orientation' as one of our subjects, that is where we actually discussed cultures but as we go into upper grades (10, 11, 12) we do not do that." The white girl learner C in school A said: "Yes, my educator (IsiZulu) normally educates us on different cultures like the one of eating 'worms' which are enjoyed by Northern Sotho and others. We have culture of whites, blacks, coloureds and Indians here at school." Learner A, B, C of school B said: "We have three different cultures of school, that is, the one of whites, blacks and coloured. Our educators sometimes give us topics on culture to discuss and write about. We also have pictures on the walls in class which display people of different cultures in their traditional activities."

Most learner interviewees made mention of being taught about different cultures when they were in grade 8 and 9 doing Life Orientation, but in the upper grades little has been focused upon with regard to culture, but they also stated that pictures are pasted on the walls to remind them of different cultures.

It must be noted that I have observed grade eleven and twelve language classes and due to time constraints I could not do observations in the lower grades. But in the grades that I have observed (languages), not much based on culture had been done as in grade 8 and 9, but the black female educator B of school A only got a chance to elaborate more on cultural diversity when dealt with poems.

The approach of dealing with cultural diversity when teaching poems is still an appropriate and the good method in influencing the interaction between learners and the educators in multicultural schools. The literature in chapter two indicates clearly that, "multiculturalism must be immersed in the classroom curriculum – 'a multi faceted approach' must be used to establish a learning atmosphere where multiple truths and perspectives are encouraged and represented" (Marulis, 2000:27)

What learners of both schools have said above confirmed what the educators in the two schools have mentioned during the interview sessions with them (see p. 13). The little that the educators do on culture in the higher grades, adds to what was learnt prior in the lower grades. Acceptance of different cultures as well as its teachings must always be practised in all the grades at school. Richard (2003: 47) wrote: "Multiculturalism should be a holistic approach that encompasses and permeates the curriculum...there should be an acceptance of all the cultural contributions of learners."

After I had gathered information on the questions asked, I continued to ask questions and I wanted to know from each learner: *Are there things which you think are not done the right way at school and which you think impede the smooth functioning of the school, or the positive interaction between learners and the educators inside and outside the classrooms?* The black girl learner A (prefect) in school A responded and said: "Things which are not done the right way here at school are caused by certain groups of pupils not the whole school. We are 1600 pupils and maybe 50 of them do not want to co-operate. They are naughty and do not want to wear school uniforms. I think their behaviour impedes the smooth functioning of the school." Learners B and C of school A said: "Yes, learners who drink and smoke at school really have a negative influence on the smooth functioning of the school so that the interaction between learners and the educators becomes tense."

Learners A, B, C of school B responded in the same way by saying. "Learners who smoke and drink liquor at school are normally taken by prefects to the principal's office. Later they are suspended from classes to work in the garden for three weeks or a month and then they come back to classes. That influences the interaction between learners and the educators in a negative way, they must be expelled from school and stay home because they do not want to learn."

I then asked: *when and where do these learners smoke and drink liquor?* The coloured boy learner of school B said: "They drink and smoke during break times."

What do you think might be the cause of such behaviour? The white boy learner A in school B said: "Sometimes the educator is not in class during his/her period and the learner(s) feel tempted to go to the toilets to drink and smoke."

My observation especially during my visits in school B was that most of the time when I moved outside, few learners were always outside. Because I did not know them, I could not say whether they were the same learners or not, and I did not know the reason. In school A no learners would move outside during school hours and I did not know about mischievous behaviour of few learners until I was told during interview sessions. The staff room is made for the educators to do their work in. Whenever I saw educators in the staff room I took it for granted that they were free and that they were busy with their work, not being aware that some of them were supposed to be in class.

The last question was: *what strategies do you think if implemented will encourage positive interaction between learners and the educators in the classrooms?* The black girl learner A in school A said: "We have about forty (40) prefects at school who will at all times be at a certain place and we also have more matrices who are given the privilege of helping around the school areas with the smoking and everything. I think the number of people smoking and drinking can be reduced here at school because more people would be helping to prevent this behaviour."

A white boy learner B in school A said: "We should learn people's culture where people come from, maybe we can understand each other better and alleviate more problems here at school."

Learners A, B, C of school B had the same feeling and said: "At school educators should begin to implement disciplinary measures such as not allowing learners to go to the toilets during teaching hours because that disturbs the smooth functioning of the school." The learner C added by saying: "The few educators who are normally late for their periods should improve and come in time to class and stop staying in the staff room when it is not necessary. Their presence in class will prevent the learners from doing wrong things. During my visit in school A and B, I did not realise that there were educators who were not obeying their timetable as they should. The educators' irresponsible behaviour left room for learners to abuse alcohol and drugs as well as the cigarette. Even though educators disobey their periods, I was told by learners that not all of them behave that way. Only a few of them do that but the rest are doing their best to enhance the relationship between learners and the educators and also to influence the climate of the school in a positive manner.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on what transpired during the process of interviews with learners as well as the educators in the two sample multicultural secondary schools in Johannesburg. The educators and learners were asked different questions although some questions were the same. The focus was mainly based on the following sub-headings:

1. understanding multiculturalism
2. the influence of multiculturalism; and
3. activities focusing on multiculturalism and focus group perspectives.

This chapter clearly outlined how learners and the educators were involved in addressing different cultures. My experience when dealt with this chapter was that I realised how important it was for learners to become actively involved inside the classroom, because that also builds confidence in the learners

themselves which prepares them to contribute meaningful in the societal gatherings. Richard (2003: 47) writes: "The classroom ambience should provide social confidence for all learners." In addition, Townsend (1994: 20) writes: "involvement means that the purpose of classroom and school activities is shared with learners. The educators discussion with pupils promotes active learning and builds confidence."

The understanding of multiculturalism in the sample schools proved to me that since 1994, South Africa has been a democratic country in action which practises the interaction which never existed before April 1994 (that is, the interaction among blacks, coloured, Indians and whites registered in the same school.) The interaction between learners and the educators influenced the classroom situation, as well as school climate, in the sense that learners coming from different cultural backgrounds were loved and cared for by all the educators in the same way, regardless of their racial groups.