GRADE R TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN UNBIASED CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT IN THE ISIPINGO DISTRICT (KWAZULU-NATAL)

by

KOOSHMILAH SOMA

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

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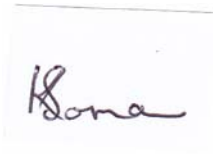
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DECLARATION

I declare that **Grade R teachers' perceptions of an unbiased classroom environment in the Isipingo District (KZN)** is my own work and that all the sources used in this study have been acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of sources.

19-08-2011

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KOOSHMILAH SOMA   Date

Student Number: 8320284

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SUMMARY

Multicultural education is only one of the major changes since the inception of the new democracy in South Africa. However, this inevitable change has resulted in many challenges for educators and educational institutions in the Isipingo District, KwaZulu Natal (KZN).

One of the primary responsibilities of a teacher is to manage diversity. The research addressed here focused on challenges experienced by Grade R teachers to create and maintain an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners in the Isipingo District, (KZN). A literature review regarding unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners as well as an empirical investigation using a qualitative approach was conducted. A semi-structured focus group interview and a follow-up focus group interview with Grade R teachers from 3 different public multicultural primary schools were used for data gathering.

The findings indicated that Grade R teachers lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to enhance unbiased classroom environments. The results of the investigation also indicated that teachers require effective training to help them cope with creating and managing unbiased classroom environments.

Teachers, like all of us,

use the dimensions of class, race and ethnicity

to bring order to their perception of the classroom environment.

Rather than teachers gaining more in–depth

and holistic understanding of the child,

with the passage of time teachers' perceptions

become increasingly stereotyped

and children become hardened caricatures

of an initially discriminatory vision.

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot 1978: 85-86

LIST OF TABLES

MAP

LIST OF FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

(KZN)   KwaZulu-Natal

INSET   In-service training

PRESET   Pre-service training

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to the Department of Education requesting
consent to conduct the research and the reply

Appendix B: Letter to the school principal, School A

Appendix C: Letter to the school principal, School B

Appendix D: Letter to the school principal, School C

Appendix E: Interview schedule

Appendix F: Transcription of the focus group interview

Appendix G: Transcription of the follow-up focus group interview

Appendix H: Field notes

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

During the apartheid era, the South African education system was based on an ideology which sought to maintain and strengthen cultural and racial diversity. After the fall of apartheid, the shift from a racially segregated education system to a multicultural education system was a major change (Le Roux 1994:123). The change in the composition of South Africa's classrooms from monocultural to multicultural means that all teachers are faced with the challenge to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of learners from different cultural backgrounds. This is especially important in classroom environments for young children.

Research done by Van der Merwe (2000:31) indicated that children at an early age are aware of the link between power and skin colour, language and physical disabilities. Larson (2001:68) supports such research findings. He informs us that cognitive psychologists have noted that the identification of physical differences such as gender, race, physical appearance and disability, is one of the earliest schemas that people invoke for categorising and classifying other people.

Moletsane (1999:38) points out that multiculturalism in schools should motivate teachers to engage in discussions about issues of unequal power relations between individuals and groups. Schools need to adopt a multicultural framework that will validate and develop all identities and cultures in our nation, and at the same time will prepare our youth to contribute effectively to the development of South Africa and the African continent as well as global development. To achieve this aim, teachers should implement an important principle of the curriculum for *Life*

Skills Learning and Teaching, namely, the creation of an anti-bias school environment that respects diversity (Department of Education 2005:80). The research aimed at adhering to this aspect.

Grade R teachers play a crucial role in creating a healthy unbiased classroom environment that will help Grade R learners to make sense of the world around them. However, educators are not only responsible for learners' intellectual development. In our multicultural society, they must also contribute to the development of unbiased attitudes and practices. As Moletsane (1999:38) says, there should be practical efforts to validate all identities and perspectives, and such efforts should go beyond eloquent academic conferencing and writing about the need for teachers to support and nourish the different perspectives of learners. Teachers need to be made aware of the complexities of different language groups, religious groups, social class *et cetera* and they must be trained in classroom practices that reflect the official policy of inclusive and transformational multiculturalism.

All educators, including Grade R teachers, must ensure that each learner has the best possible learning experiences. Grade R teachers must be aware of the whole child at all times, and ensure that each child develops socially, emotionally, physically, morally and intellectually. The Grade R classroom should be a safe, hygienic environment with areas and activities that are appropriate for the learners' age and, at the same time, stimulating, fun and exciting. Grade R learners are very active and need enough material and many different activities to keep them occupied and happy. It is essential that a Grade R teacher realises the importance of offering quality experiences to all learners in order for them to reach their potential (KZ-N DEC/UNICEF/MIET, 2008:14). To actualise the potential of each learner, the teacher must take into consideration the fact that the learners come from different cultural backgrounds and environments.

To obtain this goal teacher education institutions should be encouraged to include the educational implications of a multicultural society in the training of student teachers and also provide a related range of in-service courses. Student teachers and in-service teachers should be trained in proper response to learners' diversity of ability, behaviour, cultural and social background, ethnic descent and cultural origins. The classroom environment plays a crucial part in this regard.

1.2   RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

In the "communication era" in which we are living, modern technology has been applauded for obtaining and supplying information quickly and easily. While this is true, there appears, however, to be lack of communication in acceptance, respect and affirmation of our own and others' race, ethnicity and culture. This constitutes a serious challenge for both teachers and learners. This study concentrates on this challenge with special reference to unbiased classroom environments as it pertains to Grade R teachers.

1.2.1   Interest of the researcher

The researcher is a teacher in the KZN Education Department. The researcher is a teacher and has noticed that some Grade R teachers and learners tend to display characteristics of cultural intolerance and gender stereotypes. The research topic was chosen because the researcher and her colleagues are confronted with the problem of cultural intolerance and gender stereotypes in school. It is evident that teachers need to be effectively trained in anti-bias skills which should then be implemented in the classroom, including in Grade R.

1.2.2   The influence of adults (Grade R teachers) on learners' perceptions

Many people believe that children are 'colour-blind', that is, that they are not aware of colour or gender. According to Marshall (2002:264), five year old children have

attitudes towards and beliefs about persons based on obvious physical differences such as skin colour. Furthermore, they also have particular associations regarding gender roles. Children delineate such things as occupations, play activities, toys, and even school subjects as being distinctly male or female. Children also acquire beliefs and attitudes regarding differences in physical ability and sexual orientation. The most powerful influence on learners' perceptions is the attitudes and beliefs expressed by authority figures in their daily lives. As theorists such as Bandura and Vygotsky, cited in the document of the Coastal College KZN (2008:1) point out, learners learn responses to different cultures, the two genders and to people with special needs from adults.

Teachers, too, have an important influence on learners, and therefore require training in anti-bias principles. Training in such principles should enable them to plan an unbiased classroom environment for their learners.

Bias, specifically racial bias, was the quintessence of the apartheid era, and the learners of the post apartheid era are affected by bias if it is still the mindset of their teachers who lived during the apartheid era (Coastal College KZN, 2008:1). Biased treatment of learners occurs when learners are treated differently because of their gender, skin colour, culture or disabilities. Biased treatment always affects the child's self image (Coastal College KZN, 2008:1).

Educators, including Grade R teachers, influence the emotional development of the learners in their care and they are also role models to learners. Therefore they must accept that all learners are equal, regardless of cultural differences (Coastal College KZN, 2008: 1). Teachers must take the time and effort to learn about the different cultural groups in their class. They can only provide a truly anti-bias classroom environment if they are culturally informed people.

1.3   PROBLEM FORMULATION

In the light of the foregoing discussion, this research attempts to understand Grade R teachers' perceptions and experiences of an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners. Therefore, the main research question is: *What are Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners in the Isipingo District, (KZN)?*

The following sub-problems issue forth from the research question:

- What training did Grade R teachers receive for creating and managing unbiased classroom environments?
- What challenges related to creating and managing an unbiased classroom environment do Grade R teachers currently face?
- What strategies do the Grade R teachers currently employ for dealing with the challenges?
- What additional strategies can be recommended by the researcher to support the participants in dealing with the challenges?

The aims of this research are based on these problems and are set forth in the next section.

1.4   AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The main aim of this research study is to determine Grade R teachers' perceptions of an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners in the Isipingo District, (KZN).

This research study also aims to:

- review the existing body of literature regarding unbiased classroom environments;

- determine Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments;

- discuss the nature of training that Grade R teachers received for creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;

- identify the challenges that Grade R teachers are currently experiencing in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;

- determine the strategies currently employed by Grade R teachers to deal with these challenges

- suggest additional strategies for dealing with such challenges.

1.5   DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Many concepts are related to unbiased classroom environments. Due to the complexity and various meanings attached to such concepts, the key concepts used in this research study are clarified as follows:

1.5.1 Multicultural education

Ladson-Billings (2004:50) describes multicultural education as a composite which is no longer solely about race, class, or gender, but rather that "it is the infinite permutations that came about as a result of the dazzling array of combinations of human beings." Multicultural education is defined by Banks & Banks (2001:435) as a reform movement designed to change the total educational environment so that learners from diverse racial and ethnic groups and learners from different social backgrounds will experience equal opportunities in schools, colleges and universities.

Nieto (2000:305) states that multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and it should form part of basic education for all learners.

Multicultural education challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms pluralism, be it ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic and gender.

Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies as well as the interactions among teachers, learners and families. In fact, it permeates the very way that schools conceptualise the nature of teaching and learning. Its underlying philosophy is critical pedagogy and it focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action as the basis for social change. Thus, multicultural education attempts to promote democratic principles of social justice.

In this study, multicultural education encompasses the above ideals. Briefly stated, it refers to the idea that all Grade R learners regardless of gender, social class, race, ethnicity or culture should have an equal opportunity to learn in school.

1.5.2 Unbiased

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (http://www.merriam-webster.com) (s a) defines unbiased as free from bias; free from all prejudice and favouritism. The Free Dictionary (http://www.the free dictionary.com (s a) defines unbiased as being without bias or prejudice; impartial. In the context of this study, the concept unbiased will refer to being objective and impartial. For the sake of this research study, referring to the concept "unbiased" also means referring to the concept "anti-bias.

1.5.3 Unbiased classroom environments

A variety of strategies and methods can be used to cultivate an unbiased classroom environment in which all learners have equal opportunities to learn. In an unbiased classroom environment, the teacher creates an environment that acknowledges and values the uniqueness of every member of the school

7

community (McIntyre 2008:1). For the purpose of this research study, an unbiased classroom environment will refer to a classroom environment where teachers and learners show understanding of and respect for diverse cultures and religions.

1.5.4 Grade R

In South Africa and thus for the purposes of this study, the Reception Year or Grade R is for children aged 5 years to 6 years old. According to the Government Gazette (2001:8), the goal is that all learners entering Grade 1 should have participated in an accredited Reception Year (Grade R) programme.

1.5.5 Learner/child

For purposes of this study the concepts "learner/learners" refer to school context. The concepts "child/children refer to young children before enrolment for Grade R and when linked with the concept "parent(s)".

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

As already noted, the focus of this research study is on Grade R classroom environments in the Isipingo District, (KZN). The researcher decided to focus on Grade R because research has shown that anti-bias skills should be taught to learners as young as five years old (see section 1.1). The researcher's contention is that teachers who are effectively trained in anti-bias skills will be able to teach learners these skills. Against this background, the researcher decided to research Grade R teachers' perceptions, attitudes, training and current strategies with regard to an unbiased classroom environment and thus address the problems they experience in creating and managing an unbiased classroom environment.

The Isipingo District, (KZN) was chosen as the setting for this research study because it is where the researcher has been teaching since 1992. The Isipingo

District is near Durban, in KZN. The following map gives an indication of the area which was included in the research:

MAP OF THE ISIPINGO DISTRICT, KWAZULU-NATAL
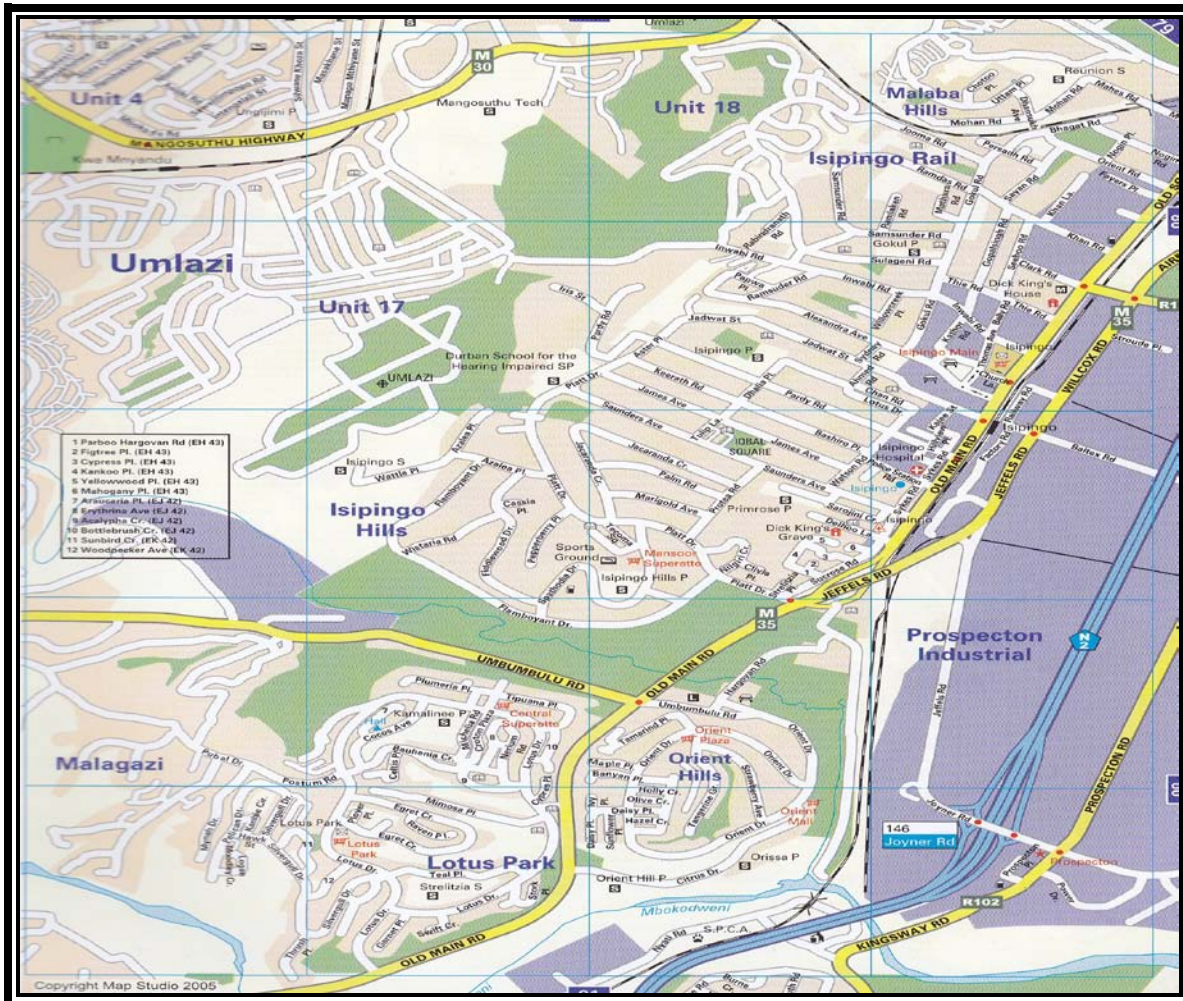
1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design is discussed in greater depth in chapter three of this study report. The discussion below outlines briefly the research design and methodology, that is, how the research was conducted and the procedure adopted to capture and analyse data.

1.7.1 Literature review

To build up a logical framework that is set within a context of related studies, a literature review is necessary. The literature study provides a suitable paradigm or framework of reference which as De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport (2002:266-269) point out, underpins and guides the research. A literature review supports and contextualises the research questions and allows the researcher to refine and redefine the research questions by placing them within the larger context.

Preferably, primary sources that are original sources should be used. Such sources include *inter alia* scholarly books, journal articles, abstracts and research reports. In this study, an example of a primary literature source is the journal article by Meier (see Bibliography). Secondary sources, on the other hand, consist of discussions, analysis and interpretation of information that was originally presented elsewhere. An example of a secondary literature source in this research study is the book by De Witt (see bibliography).

1.7.2 Empirical investigation

The empirical investigation in this research study is based on observation or experience rather than only on theory or logic. De Vos et al (2002:268) describes an empirical research design as constituting all the decisions a researcher makes in planning the research. In this research study a qualitative approach was used.

1.7.2.1 A qualitative approach

In this research study the researcher gathered information from Grade R teachers regarding their viewpoints, thoughts, perspectives and experiences of creating and managing an unbiased classroom environment. Such information is best gathered by means of qualitative research, the reason being that "qualitative research involves broadly stated questions about human experiences and realities, studied

through sustained contact with people in their environments, generating rich, descriptive data that help us to understand their experiences and attitudes" (Rees 1996:375).

According to Strauss & Corbin (1990:17), qualitative research means "research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification." The idea of qualitative research with regard to this research study is not to collate numbers but an attempt to understand an event from the participants' point of view through one focus group interview as well as one follow-up focus group interview with the same participants.

1.7.2.2   Setting

The settings chosen for this research study were three schools in the Isipingo District, near Durban. School A has 86 learners in Grade R; school B has 107 learners in Grade R and school C has 100 learners in Grade R. There are three Grade R teachers in each of these schools. The focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview with the Grade R teachers from all three schools were conducted at School B.

1.7.2.3   Sample

Purposive sampling refers to the selection of a particular sample. It is a popular tool for a qualitative research approach. According to Silverman (2000:104), purposive sampling is a matter of selecting respondents that represent the features that are of interest to the researcher's particular study. Thus, in purposive sampling the researcher must think critically about the parameters of the population and then choose the sample accordingly. Clear identification and formulation of criteria for the selection of respondents are, therefore, of cardinal importance.

In this research study the intention behind selecting participants purposively from three schools was the researcher's aim to understand various schools' Grade R teachers' perceptions and experiences of an unbiased Grade R classroom environment. A further reason for choosing these participants purposively was that their perceptions and experiences of an unbiased classroom environment are a regular point of discussion amongst themselves and these discussions and sharing of concerns and problems promote problem solving.

Purposeful sampling also enabled the researcher to exercise personal discretion in selecting participants who would provide data which would effectively address the research problem and enable the researcher to meet her aim of identifying strategies for dealing with creating and maintaining an unbiased Grade R classroom environment.

The participants chosen for the focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview were three Grade R teachers from each of the three different schools. For ethical reasons, the three public multicultural primary schools are referred to as School A, School B and School C.

1.7.2.4   *Interviews*

This study utilised one focus group interview (Appendix F) and one follow-up focus group interview (Appendix G) with the same participants. Kingry, Tiedje & Friedman (1990:124) define a focus group interview as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain data on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The purpose of a focus group is to promote self-disclosure (De Vos et al 2002:306).

This researcher's reason for using a follow-up focus group interview was that it enabled her to fill in the data that were obtained during the focus group interview.

Therefore, a follow-up focus group interview lent greater validity and reliability to the data.

Three Grade R teachers from each of the three schools in the Isipingo District, (KZN) were selected and interviewed. There were thus nine participants in the focus group interview as well as in the follow-up focus group interview. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim.

1.7.2.5   Observation by using field notes

Field notes are written accounts of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks during the course of the interview that contributes towards the richness of the data. Field-note-taking is essential because the researcher can indicate significant observations such as anxiety and other nonverbal behaviour like facial expressions and gestures that cannot be captured on audiotape recordings (Field & Morse, 1994:135). In this study the researcher also used field notes to capture non-verbal information that could not be recorded.

1.7.2.6   Data analysis procedure

Data were generated by the focus group interview as well as from the follow-up focus group interview. These data were supported by the information extracted from the observations of the participants' body language during the focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001:416), data analysis subsists in drawing comparisons and identifying similarities, followed by a discussion of the research findings, which are organised, coded, categorized and condensed.

The researcher was guided by Lincoln and Guba's strategies, cited in De Vos et al (2005:346) to ensure reliability, validity and trustworthiness. These strategies are

(1) assembling and organising data, (2) method of data analysis, and (3) reporting the findings (see section 3.5).

The findings of the focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview relating to the study under review are presented in chapter four.

1.8. CHAPTER DIVISION

This dissertation is organised as follows:

- Chapter 1 covers the rationale for the research, the main problem statement, sub-problems, the research aims, research design and methodology, as well as the demarcation of the study and the chapter division.
- Chapter 2 sets forth the literature study and thus provides the theoretical framework to Grade R teachers' perceptions and experiences of an unbiased Grade R classroom environment.
- Chapter 3 describes the research design. A detailed explanation is given of the methodology and procedures selected for the empirical investigation.
- Chapter 4 contains the analysis and interpretation of the data.
- Chapter 5 gives an overview of the research results. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations made on the basis of the analysed and interpreted data.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an introduction to the research study that was undertaken. The rationale, problem statement, aims, research methods, definition of terms and chapter division were set out. The next chapter deals with the literature study of Grade R teachers' perceptions and experiences of an unbiased Grade R classroom environment.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the signing into law of the final Constitution on 4 February 1997, the country has been undergoing a period of dynamic change where there is much support for a non-racial democracy. The diverse population of learners in South African schools challenges teachers daily to teach and manage learners of unfamiliar cultures, languages and social backgrounds. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of teachers to create appropriate learning environments that can meet the needs of learners from diverse cultural, linguistic, educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk 2008:v).

Understanding anti-bias classroom environments means that the teacher has one common goal to keep in mind and that is the careful enhancement of an inclusive environment that promotes effective teaching and learning for all learners irrespective of different cultural backgrounds in the same classroom (Gordon & Browne 2010:289-291). This is also applicable for learners in Grade R coming from multicultural backgrounds. Each learner is unique and has the right to achieve full potential while developing a positive self-esteem.

The main aim of anti-bias classroom environments for Grade R learners is to create classrooms where learners can develop a wide variety of competencies that will prepare them for living, working and interacting in a multicultural society. Teachers need to become more aware of the principles involved in creating and managing an anti-bias classroom environment.

Before discussing the literature review on anti-bias classroom environments for Grade R learners, the researcher saw the need to discuss the nature and characteristics of multicultural education, stereotypes, prejudices, racism, unbiased as well as coping with diversity in South Africa. However, due to page constraints applicable to dissertations with limited scope, multicultural education cannot be thoroughly discussed.

2.2   MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Although the focus of this dissertation is not on multicultural education as such, unbiased classroom environments cannot be understood without knowledge of the characteristics of and some basic conditions for effective multicultural education.

2.2.1 The nature of multicultural education

Specific definitions of multicultural education vary widely with respect to content, selection, methodological focus and referent group orientations. However, strong definitions can be grouped into several recurrent categories.

Multicultural education can be defined as, "the transferring of the recognition of our pluralistic society into our education system. Furthermore, multicultural education is the operationalising of the education system in such a fashion that it includes all racial and cultural groups. Therefore, multicultural education must be regarded as a process which guides the total education enterprise" (Lemmer et al 2008:3-4).

According to Bennet (1990:11), multicultural education is comprised of four interactive dimensions:

- the movement toward equity;
- curriculum reform;
- the process of becoming interculturally competent and
- the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination, especially racism.

Ford (1999:13-14), states that multiculturalism is a perspective that develops through the process of human interaction. It is a way of being, perceiving, thinking, and acting in the world. It cannot be a specific teaching strategy. It is a perspective through which to view and implement appropriate teaching strategies. It is a way of viewing the world in general and a way of perceiving the teaching-learning context within that worldview.

Multicultural education is based on the belief that racism is founded on the misunderstanding and ignorance which leave individuals open to racist misinterpretations. The philosophy is to promote a more positive understanding and appreciation of black cultures, and thereby begin to undermine racism (Grinter cited in Duarte & Smith 2000:135).

According to Trumpelmann (1999:30), multicultural education is defined as "a particular ethos of openness, empathy, mutual respect and human dignity… transforming every aspect of the school atmosphere."

2.2.2 Characteristics of multicultural education

A major change in the South African Education System has been the shift from a racially segregated education system to a multicultural education system. The composition of schools has changed and government departments which were previously divided have been merged to form single departments. By way of example, there were previously 15 education departments in South Africa. These

have merged to form a single Education Department with Provincial Departments sharing responsibility for service delivery (Le Roux 1994:123-124).

Lemmer et al (2008:4) state that multicultural education includes many programmes and practices. Multicultural education will affect a school according to the needs and circumstances of the school. The following are the widely accepted general features of multicultural education. Therefore multicultural education . . .

- recognizes and accepts the existence of different cultural groups.

- promotes cultural preservation and acculturation.

- promotes mutual cooperation and interaction.

- views cultural diversity positively.

- beliefs that all cultural groups have equal rights.

- promotes equal educational opportunities.

- includes many different aspects of human differences.

- should be part of the teaching and learning process.

- leads to effective teaching.

Banks (2007:83) identifies the following five dimensions of multicultural education:

- content integration;

- the knowledge construction process;

- prejudice reduction;

- an equity pedagogy and

- an empowering school structure and social structure.

With regard to social structure, Gordon & Browne (2010:335, 559) state that one school can have a mixture of racial and social diversity and the discrepancy between equal opportunity and reality can only be altered if the problems be recognized and specific goals being set in place to address the needs of all the learners. One of the greatest obstacles for teachers is to establish more trusting and equitable relationships between learners of different social backgrounds and to

accept that their perceptions of the diverse social committees might be biased and susceptible to misperception (Larson 2001:840).

Furthermore, role players in education cannot assume that barriers to inter-racial contact will disappear naturally and that contact between different cultural groups will ensue. Racial and cultural prejudice will also not diminish without intervention and creating a learning classroom environment that supports sound inter-racial engagement must be a priority in schools (Lemmer et al 2008:6).

2.2.3 Stereotypes

Differences in the society are opportunities to reveal stereotypes. Differences such as age, religion, physical and mental abilities and disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, income, family and social status and physical appearance all pave the way for stereotypes. Generalizations based on inaccurate information or assumptions can easily result in stereotypes. Stereotypes are linked with two other concepts, namely prejudice and discrimination as all these concepts do not respect diversity (Lopes 2004:1).

According to Lemmer et al (2008:240), stereotyping can be defined as creating mental categories of events, items and people into specific groups. Stereotypes influence how people behave and perceive other racial groups. Stereotyped explanations result into rigid and overgeneralised perceptions of persons or racial, cultural and national groups. Stereotypes control people's understanding of and conduct towards groups other than their own (Lemmer et al 2008:240).

Augoustinos & Roseware (2001:143-156), investigate the distinction between stereotype knowledge and personal beliefs in young children's racial bias development. The results for the very young children indicate that the personal beliefs and stereotype knowledge articulated should not be interpreted as characteristically imagined prejudice, but the inability of the young children to

articulate their personal beliefs. In contrast, older learners have a better ability to articulate personal beliefs that may be contrary to generally held stereotypes. This is consistent with the large body of scholarship indicating that children develop ethnic attitudes by age three and develop systematic racial prejudices between 5 and 7 years of age (Aboud & Amato, 2001:65-85).

2.2.4 Prejudice

According to Gordon & Browne (2010:559), prejudices are impressions, indications, ideas and attitudes that are already shaped about other people and situations before experiencing full or sufficient information thereof.

Lemmer et al (2008:25), define prejudice as a favourable or unfavourable opinion formed of something or someone without examining the facts. Prejudice deals with our feelings towards people.

Aboud & Amato (2001:70) define racial prejudice as a negative or unfavourable reaction to people from a racial group because of their group affiliation.

According to Bennet, (1990:24), many teachers, administrators, and learners who are racially prejudiced can develop the kinds of understanding required to become less so. This is the major goal of multicultural education. Teachers, like all people, are often not aware of their prejudices. If they are to have equally positive expectations for learners of all races, they must understand the cultural differences that often exist in the desegregated classroom. The fact that cultural differences are frequently associated with racial differences often confirms myths and stereotypes associated with race. Teachers need guidelines to help them observe and interpret culturally different behaviour. Such guidelines can help prevent blanket assumptions that certain behaviours and values fit with certain racial groups (Bennet 1990:24).

According to Katz (2003:897-909), it is important to expose children early to curriculum and other programs designed to reduce racial prejudice, as prejudice develops early in a child's life. Schools need to be aware of their learner's attitudes, because they play an important socialization role. Perkins & Mebert (2005:497-512), state that learners that are exposed to multi-cultural curricula view people in more positive than negative ways.

2.2.5 Racism

It is generally held that racism is a negative attitude based on faulty assumptions and that attitude is developed early in a person's life. Researchers such as Aboud & Amato (2001:65-85), and Augustinos & Roseware (2001:143-156), argue that around 7 years of age, children begin to moderate their biases and become influenced by the attitudes of adults and peers. Children under the age of five rely on superficial racial distinctions, but their understanding of race is incomplete. As they get older, issues concerning race become contextual - in other words, defined by social, cognitive and emotional influences (Aboud & Amato, 2001:65-85).

Racism is habitually associated with prejudice (Carter 1995 cited in Clauss-Ehlers 2006:52). When people of a certain cultural group believe that their race is superior to other cultural groups, it is called racism (Lemmer et al 2008:24). Cultural racism refers to the beliefs of one cultural group to be more important than the beliefs of other cultural groups (Clauss-Ehlers 2006:52).

Kohli (2008:2) is a literature source that supports the above mentioned perceptions of the participants. Teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity or class, experience racism in schools.

According to Derman-Sparks (1989:7), children will grow up to be "natural" non-racist adults only when they are living in a non-racist society. The responsibility of teachers and adults are crucial in guiding children towards being anti-racist. Adults

have a role to play in teaching learners to be anti-racist. In order to play this role, adults must first be clear themselves as to the difference between racism and racial identity. Five year olds can distinguish between racial differences but these differences only become racist when either inferior or superior value labels are placed upon them. Learners need accurate knowledge and pride about their racial identity and accurate knowledge and appreciation of other racial groups.

Van der Merwe (2000:31-32) states that educational philosophy and methodology include a recommendation that teachers should display pictures of learners from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds in their classrooms in order to engender respect for diversity. Books and other teaching material should reflect racial and cultural diversity to avoid racism.

2.2.6 Coping with diversity in South African schools

Not only race, social class and gender determine different cultural groups but also ability, language and religion, convictions, beliefs, moral values and norms. Schools are powerful instruments that support and cater for cultural pluralism. The democratization process since 1994 required role players and policy-makers to focused on multiculturalism in schools.

2.2.6.1   The South African Constitution (1996)

According to Lemmer et al (2008:7), "…human dignity, equality, freedom, non-racism and non-sexism" are the basic principles of the Constitution. According to the Constitution, everyone, and that means all different cultural groups, has the right to basic education in public schools through one of the official languages. Furthermore, the Constitution protects learners against discrimination by stating that they may not be excluded from schools on grounds of their language, religion or race. Learners' cultural background must be protected and acknowledged.

2.2.6.2   The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

The purpose and objective of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 is to provide for a uniform system for the organization, governance and funding of schools, to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools and to provide matters connected therewith. The Act also provides for a democratic change in South African Schools to resolve the past educational injustices and to provide a high quality education for all learners (RSA 1996: Preamble).

2.2.6.3   Report on the Gender Equity Task Team (1997)

The Minister of Education appointed a Gender Equity Task Team in September 1996, chaired by a full-time Interim Gender Equity Commissioner who was to report to the Department of Education. The Task Team submitted a report in 1997, entitled Gender equity in education. As a result of the recommendations of the Task Team, a Gender Equity Directorate was established in the Department of Education (Mda & Mothata 2000:5).

This Gender Policy Framework outlines South Africa's vision for gender equality and how it intends to realize this ideal. The framework establishes guidelines for South Africa as a nation to remedy the historical legacy by defining new terms of reference for interacting with each other in both the private and public spheres, and by proposing and recommending an institutional framework that facilitates equal access to goods and services for both women and men. Since the early years are important in developing non-sexist and non-racist attitudes, the Task Team suggested that Gender Equity be addressed in all phases of education (Lemmer et al 2008:7).

2.2.6.4   Report on the study on racism in schools by the South African Human Rights Commission (1999)

According to Vally & Dalamba (1999:67), all people have preferences and dislikes, and no matter how hard one tries, there are persistent stereotypes that tend to creep into one's thoughts so often. One of the recommendations given in a report on a study done by the South African Human Rights Commission is that each school should have an anti-discrimination policy. It is suggested that the South African Schools Act be amended to ensure that the development of such a policy is the responsibility of, and adhered to by school governing bodies. It is further suggested that the National Department of Education must disseminate guidelines to all governing bodies to facilitate the development of such a policy. This should be accomplished in tandem with anti-racist/anti-bias training for all school constituencies (Vally & Dalamba 1999:67). A range of national policies and norms and standards have been recently adopted. These include policies on admission, language, religion and a code of conduct. There is no doubt that anti-racist teaching practices should become a compulsory component of both pre-service training (PRESET) for teachers and in-service training (INSET) courses.

Both prospective and current teachers' professional development takes place through PRESET and INSET. It is believed that insufficient attention has been given to human rights and anti-racist training which is a glaring gap, since skills and knowledge on these issues are crucial for addressing issues around racial integration and racism. The report further suggests that schools need to be encouraged to initiate their own programmmes without detracting from the importance and urgency of a systematic training programme initiated by the provincial education departments. Vally & Dalamba (1999:72) find that while there are many gaps and limitations in policies, it is clear that many schools either ignore or deliberately flout existing policy.

Coping with diversity also involves the problem of different languages in one classroom.

2.2.7 The language barrier in multicultural schools

According to Lemmer et al (2008:36-37), it is seldom possible to achieve perfect conformity between the aim of communication as set by the teacher and the reaction desired from the learners. Teachers not only have to plan what they want to communicate to the learners, but they also have to consider the learners' needs and design messages in such a way that learners will interpret them as intended. If not, communication failure or even miscommunication will be inevitable.

Clauss-Ehlers (2006:67) agrees that different languages in the same classroom are problematic. Language is used by teachers to "… create a space to respond, relate, and analyze the verbalizations that the individual reveals". Language is the primary tool for teaching and learning. It is therefore indeed a challenge when creating an unbiased classroom environment where learners with various mother tongues engage in learning activities. Through language learners experience their culture, their world and themselves. This expression has implications when creating an unbiased classroom environment. A classroom environment should maximize opportunities for language use. If learners' home language differs from other learners in the same classroom, involving learners as active participants can be a major challenge. The use of nonlinguistic material, such as pictures, toys and graphs might be a way to promote understanding (Clauss-Ehlers 2006:71-72). Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html) also acknowledges language diversity as a problem but also as a reality which must be dealt with because the world is diverse and therefore all people experience diversity regarding language. According to her, the challenge is rather to determine whether the language diversity can be observed as positive or negative.

Goduka (1998:36) states that English is perceived as a language of power in South Africa and worldwide, and that English monolingualism is viewed as an asset. Those who speak a language other than English in school settings are generally viewed as having a problem that needs to be corrected.

2.3   TRAINING OF TEACHERS REGARDING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Mazibuko (2006:69), states that the current development and training programmes offered by South African universities focus on content and not on race, language and ethnicity. The training programmes seldom introduce multicultural, multilingual and non-racial teaching experiences.

Research conducted by Marais & Meier (2008:194-195) provides more evidence that teacher training programmes do not prepare students to teach in multicultural schools. According to them, students who have completed their teacher training programmes, still lack in-depth knowledge of and insight into the complex phenomenon of multicultural education. What teachers lack most is an awareness of and sensitivity to the aims of multicultural education. In spite of the fact that the students are about to enter the teaching profession, they do not know how to implement principles and aspects of diversity in their teaching strategies. Most respondents displayed little or no evidence of a multilayered understanding of multicultural education and they showed a seriously deficient conception of anti-bias knowledge and assumptions, prejudice and stereotypes.

The afore-going paragraphs focused on different aspects of multicultural education as point of departure for discussing unbiased classroom environments. Thereupon the focus point of the following section will cover information regarding the Grade R learner, the Grade R classroom environment, creating and managing an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners as well as Riehl's model (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html) for analyzing classroom environments for an ant-bias approach.

2.4   THE GRADE R LEARNER

The Grade R learner, also referred to as the Reception Year learner is a five- and six year-old child before going to Grade 1. These early years of children are critical for their development (Department of Education 2008:15). The Reception Year child is currently part of the four-year Foundation Phase but it is not yet compulsory by law to attend Grade R classes. Although the current national plan does not require Grade R learners to attend Reception Year classes accommodated at primary or preprimary schools, these learners who do enroll for Grade R have an advantage above learners who did not complete Grade R before attending formal education in the Foundation Phase.

2.5   CREATING AND MANAGING AN UNBIASED GRADE R CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Derman-Sparks & Ramsey (2006:20) belief that even when teachers do recognize the value of unbiased education, they are often unsure how to integrate it meaningfully in classroom environments. Learners have to be guided in recognizing biased information in its many forms, such as books, pictures, television and video games.

According to Gordon & Browne (2010:309-310), anti-bias classroom environments can help learners to develop positive identities because they value individual differences in race, ethnicity, ability and gender.

2.5.1 Planning an unbiased Grade R classroom environment

When planning an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners there are two important principles the teachers must always keep in mind. Firstly, to provide play opportunities which are still the vehicle with which the Grade R learner achieves different cognitive, emotional and social outcomes and secondly to

enhance school readiness. The Grade R class is often referred to as a bridging class, preprimary class or preschool class. In the Grade R class learners are introduced to activities that the Grade 1 curriculum will require. Therefore the Reception Year classroom environment should be well-planned in order to support children in becoming school ready.

The term "school readiness" is used by most teachers to describe how prepared their pupils are to begin Grade 1. School readiness is accomplished once the child as a "person-in-totality" can cope with the responsibilities that the formal instruction situations will require (De Witt 2009:170).Therefore it is obvious that a Grade R classroom environment should accommodate learning material and learning activities that support school readiness. As some teachers say that learners in Grade R need to become school ready, it is also true that schools need to be "child ready". Especially the environment, and for the sake of this dissertation, the classroom environment is crucial. If the classroom environment is filled with opportunities to learn about and experience diversity, learners will benefit and will have a definite advantage over learners who are not exposed to multicultural learning events. This means that schools need to focus on the educational needs of Grade R learners (Davin & Van Staden 2005:5).

An unbiased classroom environment is much more that just pretty pictures and bulletin boards reflecting diversity. The classroom environment should be planned to be non-judgmental as it is a space where many different ethnicities are represented (McIntyre 2008:1).

When planning an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners, it is important to keep in mind that an awareness of different cultural groups starts in the early years. According to Clauss-Ehlers (2006:9-10), learners who experience an unbiased classroom environment are more likely to excel in school because the different needs of the diverse learner population are addressed in a proper way.

Classroom environment, if well-planned, becomes a very powerful tool and can be used as "a knowledge building instrument" to promote diversity (Derman-Sparks 1989:33). To organize the physical space for a Grade R classroom, teachers must show an appreciation of cultural, racial and ethnic differences and acknowledge differences in learners. It is crucial to discover the diversity within the classroom which means that teachers must know the learners and their cultural backgrounds. Grade R teachers should demonstrate a sound knowledge base about cultural pluralism and be able to see the world of the learner through multiple perspectives. An unbiased classroom environment must promote multiculturalism, goodwill and acceptance (Robles de Melendez & Ostertag 1997:17).

According to Gordon & Browne (2010:389-308), learners will be able to see that culture consists of different ways that people do the same activities if the physical and interpersonal environments are well-planned. An anti-bias classroom environment provides a more inclusive approach by incorporating the positive aspects of a multicultural curriculum.

Furthermore, children learn lessons early in life about identity and attitudes concerning language, age, race, gender and disability. Teachers can prevent or counter stereotyping by arranging an anti-bias physical environment and by creating an atmosphere of problem-solving. An anti-bias environment encourages boys and girls to play together, respecting differences and including others in new ways. A well-planned anti-bias classroom environment promotes principles such as a positive self-concept, respect for similarities and differences, and communication skills (Gordon & Browne 2010:289-290).

Grade R classroom environments are greatly influenced by parents as well. Teachers need to work with families to create an anti-bias and self-help focus in learners' education and care (Gordon & Browne 2010:305).

Kendall cited in Richey & Wheeler (2000: 211), outlines the following five principles that are important when planning unbiased classroom environments. An unbiased classroom environment must . . .

- teach learners to respect other cultures and values as well as their own.
- help all children to function successfully in a multicultural, multiracial society.
- develop a positive self-concept in those children who are most affected by racism.
- support all children to experience both their differences as culturally diverse people and their similarities as human beings in a positive way.
- allow children to experience people of diverse cultures working together as unique parts of a whole community.

Against this background the different areas in a Grade R classroom needed to enhance an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners can be introduced.

2.5.2 Different areas in the Grade R classroom

Learner's play is strongly influenced by the settings and materials that adults use to create the environment. The design of indoor spaces may foster or discourage imaginary play, social interaction or independence (Gordon & Browne 2010:301-302).

Classroom space should be arranged in different play areas, such as the fantasy play area, the book area and writing table, the block area, the toys and games area, the creative art area and the discovery table (Gordon & Browne 2010:347-348). All these areas need to be unbiased and teachers must focus on collecting multicultural materials even if it is over a period of time.

The fantasy play area needs to have cloths and objects representing all the cultural groups in the class. In this make-believe area different materials to dress up and to

pretend to be someone else should be available and there must be no room for prejudice and stereotypes. Differences should be recognized and celebrated. Multiracial dolls, clothing, shoes, hats, scarves, belts, rugs and mats from different cultures can be displayed in this area (Robles de Melendez & Ostertag 1997:12).

The book area also has to represent stories and pictures concerning diversity. This area is usually situated in a quiet area. Books are important because from books they learn about their own culture as well as other cultures. Books about themselves and their families and also books with story tapes, including ethnic background music are appreciated in an unbiased classroom environment. Moreover, books on different lifestyles, alphabet and counting books of other cultures, journals, magazines and newspapers in different languages are prerequisites in classrooms. Introduce as many books as possible that reflect the culture of all the Grade R learners (Robles de Melendez & Ostertag 1997:7, 9).

The block area must include posters of buildings and environments representing multiculturalism. Furthermore, lots of different types of toys must be provided. These toys must reflect diversity. Games help Grade R learners to develop skills to sort, match, compare and to fit pieces together. These skills are important for mathematics and science. Diversity must also manifest in their games.

Playing in the creative art area requires decision making skills. Therefore, Grade R learners must feel free to use colour and to paste, to tear and to cut as they wish. Different cultural groups will reflect different identities with regard to creative art which must be fostered and not criticized (Gordon & Browne 2010:348). Art materials for the creative art area include the following: skin colored markers, dry fish scales and coral rocks, craft paper, skin tone papers, collage materials from different cultural groups, scraps of imported cloth, origami papers, rice papers, dry gourds, coconut shells, red clay, feathers, and raffia. Visual displays, such as posters of art and artifacts have to be accommodated in the creative art area (Robles de Melendez & Ostertag 1997:5).

The discovery table must offer a wide range of different objects in order to stimulate the interests of all the learners from all the different races in the same classroom. The Grade R learners' interest about themselves and the local community can be a point of departure (Robles de Melendez & Ostertag 1997:3). Music and movement are excellent tools that enhance respect for diversity. Folk songs, ethnic music, vocal music and instrumental music from all over the world contribute towards a positive understanding of multicultural classroom environments. Songs with simple words and melodies that encourage differences between, acceptance of and cooperation with other cultures are expressions of appreciation for diversity (Robles de Melendez & Ostertag 1997:11).

The overarching goal in creating an anti-bias classroom environment is to provide a climate of positive self and group identity development through which every child will achieve his or her fullest potential (http:www.teachingforchange.org).

2.5.3 Classroom culture

Classroom culture is formed with the different cultures of teachers and learners. This type of classroom is called a microculture (Lemmer et al 2008:19). According to Hernandez (1989), cited in Lemmer et al (2008:19), teachers and learners bring their own set of experiences, values and beliefs into the classroom. Cultural transmission and socialization take place in classrooms. Classroom culture is an extension of the dominant school culture. Therefore, learners whose cultural backgrounds are different from the dominant school culture can experience cultural alienation and discontinuity. Some learners fail or drop out of school because of extreme cultural discontinuity. Learners succeed academically if their culture is closer to the teacher's culture. The teacher has to bridge the cultural gaps in the classroom. This can be done by using the teaching and learning process to show respect for the cultural differences amongst learners and to be knowledgeable about their backgrounds.

The following suggestions, introduced by Lemmer et al (2008:20) can be used by teachers to learn more about their learners:

- Meet learners and their families of different cultural backgrounds.

- Meet community leaders.

- Conduct workshops and information evenings.

- Invite parents or members of the community to address learners in the school.

- Allow learners to write their autobiography.

- Become knowledgeable about a culture by collecting and reading resources.

According to Saville-Troike (1984) cited in Lemmer et al (2008:20), classroom culture can be enhanced when teachers know about their learner's cultural backgrounds with regard to family roles, communication in families, discipline, food, and traditions.

2.5.4 Riehl's model for analysing classroom environments for an anti-bias approach

To analyse classroom environments for an anti-bias approach, the model of Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html), an expert in Early Childhood Education is used. Riehl identifies five ways to analyze classroom environments in order to determine whether the classroom environment is sound for multicultural education. According to Riehl, awareness of bias in the society as well as in education is becoming increasingly important. Biased issues are not only limited to culture or race, gender and age, but it also refers to social class, religion, or physical and mental abilities. One of the goals of high quality child care programs is to help learners become sensitive to issues of bias and to develop skills needed to respect a multicultural society. To develop these skills the learner has to be educated in an anti-bias environment. The following five principles of Riehl's model for anti-bias classroom environments can be used as guidelines.

2.5.4.1   Everyday and everywhere

When teachers think of bias and anti-bias aspects, they may feel overwhelmed, because bias is present in all aspects of our lives. Bias may be present in learner's books or games. Some cultures may be omitted or underrepresented in books. Gender stereotypes may be present in the games played by learners.

Teachers must realize bias and anti-bias exists and that something must be one to overcome this. Teachers can include anti-bias concepts in classroom displays and curricular lessons and they must make a conscious effort to make learners aware of bias and anti-bias. This can be done by including anti-bias concepts in daily lessons in the classroom.

2.5.4.2   Mirrors to self-esteem

Riehl states that all learners need to develop a positive self-concept. Teachers must ensure that the classroom environment reflects all the cultural groups of learners in the classroom. Teachers can build confidence and increase motivation if learners are able to choose their own activities and materials, talk about what they are doing and share their achievements with others.

2.5.4.3   Windows to diversity and balance

According to Riehl, all learners experience diversity because of the diversity in the world. Diversity can be perceived as positive or negative. The teacher must provide positive opportunities for diversity.

Teachers will not have to provide opportunities for interactions between diverse groups of learners if their classroom environments are racially and culturally diverse. These teachers should focus on how to promote positive interactions between learners. Learners should be taught to respect all cultures.

If the classroom environment has little gender diversity, the teacher can use the differences between boys and girls to build up diversity. The teacher could assign classroom duties to boys and girls regardless of gender. The teacher can also encourage boys to play 'girls' games and vice versa.

The teacher has to provide balance in the classroom environment by ensuring that all cultures in the community are represented in classroom displays. The charts in the classroom should reflect the different cultures and both genders.

Teachers must be sensitive to all learners needs. Learners must be taught to be proud of their cultural traditions. Teachers should offer comfort and closeness. They must be aware of learners who need comfort by offering a reassuring hand to hold, a hug, a lap to sit on or just a comforting word.

2.5.4.4 Culturally appropriate, historically accurate, and non-stereotypical

All anti-bias classroom environments will look different depending on the different cultural groups the school serves. If teachers do not have any personal experience of diversity, or if the learners and the community are not diverse, teachers must still provide accurate and non-stereotypical images of diversity. By providing accurate images learners will not receive subtle messages.

2.5.4.5 Critical thinking and activism

Teachers can help learners develop skills to evaluate the diverse world by teaching them how to deal with a biased book. Open-ended questions can be asked that encourage problem-solving skills.

Teachers should help learners and the community to develop anti-bias skills. By training learners in anti-bias skills, teachers will be training future leaders and

workers in the world (Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html).

2.6   CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, due to page constraints for a dissertation of limited scope, it cannot be claimed that this chapter covers all the aspects of multicultural education and unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners. However, it is clear from the literature review that creating an unbiased indoor learning environment is a very complex challenge. Support from both the school and the families should be available from an early stage of learners' education.

What also becomes clear from the references is that educational institutions are keys in bringing about effective and meaningful change in a Grade R classroom environment. What educational institutions need, therefore, are multicultural educational principles to guide them towards planning an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners.

The next chapter deals with the research design in order to explain how the research has been conducted, the initial phase being the gathering of data from participants.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter, the literature review, outlined the findings of a number of previous studies done on anti-bias classroom environments and it provided the necessary framework of reference for this research study.

As stated in chapter 1, the research question driving this study is: *What are Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners in the Isipingo District, (KZN)?*

In particular, this study aims to:

- review the existing body of literature regarding unbiased classroom environments;
- determine Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments;
- discuss the nature of training that Grade R teachers received for creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;
- identify the challenges that Grade R teachers are currently experiencing in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;
- determine the strategies currently employed by Grade R teachers to deal with these challenges and
- recommend additional strategies for dealing with such challenges

In order to meet the last aim of this research, namely to recommend additional strategies for creating and managing unbiased classrooms for Grade R learners in the Isipingo District, (KZN), the researcher needed to investigate the perceptions

and current challenges experienced by Grade R teachers as well as the current strategies used by Grade R teachers. This chapter presents a description of the research design that was deemed most appropriate for such an investigation. This chapter also discusses the procedure followed in gaining access to the research site, deciding who the participants in the research study should be, how the data should be collected and analysed and giving an explanation of the research instrument employed.

3.2   LITERATURE STUDY

A literature study of both primary and secondary sources was done. Newman (1997:122) points out that the first step in determining a topic for a researchable question is to consult relevant literature. The literature review helps the researcher to gain insight into the topic and plays an essential role in determining both the feasibility and credibility of the research study. It places the research in a broad contextual framework of relevant knowledge and thus provides a foundation for further research (Bell 1993:33-34).

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

De Vos et al (2005:268) refer to the concept "design" as the choices a researcher makes in planning the research. The research design sets out guidelines to be followed in addressing the research problem. The design includes the aims and the methods of data collection and analysis and also describes how the trustworthiness of the participants is to be established. McMillan & Schumacher (2006:33) refer to the research design as a structured plan used to obtain evidence that can lead to valid, reliable answers to research questions. In brief, a research design is the overall plan that will be followed in conducting the research.

The researcher has selected a qualitative research approach to collect data, and the rationale for using the qualitative approach will be set out in the following section.

3.3.1 Qualitative research approach

A qualitative research approach involves the gathering of data on a naturally occurring phenomenon. Words rather than numbers are used to gather, analyse and interpret data. The researcher seeks the meaning of the phenomenon using a variety of methods, and the search for meaning must continue until a deep understanding is achieved (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:26). Denzin & Lincoln (2000:324) define qualitative research as a multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter.

A qualitative research approach was selected for the purpose of this study, because it enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth information from participants in their natural setting. In this study, the natural setting was the schools where the participants, the Grade R teachers in the Isipingo District, (KZN) are teaching. Their opinions, thoughts, mindsets, ideas, feelings, attitudes and perceptions of unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners were explored. Data were collected by conducting one focus group interview and a follow-up focus group interview consisting of semi-structured and open-ended questions.

3.3.2 The role of the researcher

Because the researcher interacts directly with participants and he/she is the instrument for measuring field data, he/she has the responsibility to be attentive and sensitive to what happens in the field and to be disciplined about recording data (Bryman 2000:96).

The researcher is a teacher in School A and is eager to acquire skills and knowledge about unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners. The researcher strived for objectivity and, as far as humanly possible, she put aside and thus minimised the effect her own personal opinions might have had on the research study.

3.3.3 Settings

The settings chosen for the research study are three public multicultural primary schools in the Isipingo District. These particular schools were selected because they were easily accessible to the researcher. The schools are referred to as School A, School B and School C. The Grade R teachers from these schools were used as participants. A focus group interview and a follow-up focus group interview with the same participants were conducted at school B. All three schools are well resourced and each school has three Grade R classes and thus three Grade R teachers. Below is background information regarding each of these schools.

3.3.3.1 School A

School A is situated in Malukazi, Isipingo. It has a learner population of 1150 of which 86 are in the three Grade R classes. The head of the Foundation Phase, which includes grade R, is a 62 year old female teacher.

3.3.3.2 School B

School B is situated in Orient Hills, Isipingo. It has a learner population of 1200 of which 107 are in the three Grade R classes. A 50 year old female is the head of the Foundation Phase.

3.3.3.3   School C

School C is also situated in Orient Hills, Isipingo. It has a learner population of 950 of which 100 are in the three Grade R classes. A 47 year old female is the head of the Foundation Phase.

3.3.4 Sample

According to Maxwell (2005:102), sampling refers to the decision made as to whom to involve in the study. In this research study the researcher used purposive sampling. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a strategy of selecting small groups or individuals that are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:343). Creswell (1998:118) points out that "purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study".

The intention behind the purposive selection of participants for this research study was the researcher's aim of understanding only Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments in the Isipingo District. Because the selected teachers are teaching Grade R learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, it was assumed that these teachers could provide information-rich data that would shed abundant light on the research theme.

A summary of the details of the participants is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – SAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS

School A			
Participant	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	40 years	35 years	64 years
Qualification	Diploma in Junior Primary Phase	1 Year Course ECD	Degree in Junior Primary Phase
Years of experience	4 years	3 years	30 years
School B			
Participant	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	30 years	44 years	50 years
Qualification	Diploma in ECD	Diploma in ECD	Post-graduate degree in Junior Primary Phase
Years of experience	6 years	5 years	25 years
School C			
Participant	Teacher 7	Teacher 8	Teacher 9
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	40 years	55 years	43 years
Qualification	Degree in Junior Primary Phase	Degree in Junior Primary Phase	Diploma in Junior Primary Phase
Years of experience	15 years	20 years	20 years

3.4 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The two main methods of data collection used in this study are (1) one focus group interview and one follow-up focus group interview with semi-structured and open-ended questions and (2) observation during interviews, using field notes.

3.4.1 Focus group interview

Focus group interviews are group interviews that are conducted in order to understand how people think or feel about an issue, service or product. Participants in a focus group have certain common characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group (De Vos et al 2005:299). In this research study the researcher used a focus group interview to determine Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments. The researcher scheduled a follow-up focus group interview by going back to the same participants to collect additional, more enriched data.

3.4.1.1 The nature of a focus group interview

According to De Vos et al (2005:299), a focus group interview should be conducted in a tolerant environment that encourages participants to share wishes, concerns, perceptions, points of view and experiences. Kingry, Tiedje & Friendman (1990) cited in De Vos et al (2005:300) define a focus group interview as a carefully planned discussion designed to ascertain the participants' perceptions of an area of interest, and it is therefore conducted in a comfortable environment. Focus group interviews are described by Morgan (1997) cited in De Vos et al (2005:300) as a research technique that collects information through group interaction on a topic which is decided on by the researcher.

43

3.4.1.2 Advantages of a focus group interview

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2002:49) state that in the field of research, focus group interviewing provides the researcher with an opportunity to enter into the participants' perspectives in order to understand and give meaning to a certain phenomenon, which is for the sake of this research study unbiased classroom environments.

Focus group interviews are especially useful for understanding the variety of others' experiences (De Vos et al 2005:301). In a focus group interview a skilled interviewer can delve deeper through follow-up questions or probes, which results in the collection of highly detailed information (Goodwin 2002:399). The process of sharing and comparing among the participants is an important advantage because in this process much information is produced in a short time.

A further advantage of a focus group interview is that it allows the researcher access to past events and to situations during which the researcher was not self present (McKenzie, Powell & Usher, 1997:165).

Focus group interviews draw on three of the fundamental strengths that are shared by all qualitative methods:

Exploration and discovery: De Vos et al (2005:301) point out that focus groups can be used to investigate and expose the reality of complex behaviour and motivation.

Sharing and comparing: One of the purposes of focus group interviews, as Krueger & Casey (2000:7) state, is to promote self-disclosure among participants. Because there is continuous communication between the facilitator and the participants, focus group interviewing is a way of listening to other people and learning from them.

Content and depth: Hutchinson & Web, cited in De Vos et al (2005:296), draw one's attention to the fact that it takes time and thought to generate useful questions with appropriate content and structure for a scheduled interview.

Interpretation: According to Krueger & Casey (2000:127), analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from a focus group interview begin by going back to the purpose of the study. These authors provide seven established criteria for interpreting coded data: words; context; internal consistency; frequency and extensiveness of comments; specificity of comments; intensity of comments and big ideas (De Vos et al 2005:312).

3.4.1.3   *Conducting and recording a focus group interview*

The researcher sought permission and clearance from the Department of Education before field work commenced (Appendix A). After receiving approval from the Department, the researcher also sought permission from the school principals (Appendix B, C and D). Thereafter the researcher approached each participant individually and explained the aims of the research. On their agreement to participate, the researcher followed up by confirming the venue, date, time and length of the focus group interview. The same information was given to the participants of the follow-up focus group interview. The focus group interview (Appendix F) and the follow-up focus group interview (Appendix G) were held in a Grade R classroom at School B. The questions were indicated in an interview schedule (Appendix E). Semi-structured questions as well as open-ended questions were asked. The focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview were recorded on audiotape with the permission of all the participants. The focus group interview as well as the follow-up focus group interview involved asking questions, listening, expressing interest and recording the responses of the participants to ensure completeness of the verbal interaction. Observation of participants during the interviews was done and recorded by means of field notes.

Patton (2002:383) encourages researchers to take focused notes while conducting interviews. Taking notes helped this researcher to record nonverbal communication, which also facilitated data analysis. The focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview were transcribed verbatim.

3.4.1.4   The interview schedule

A questionnaire that lists predetermined questions to be explored in the course of an interview and that gives structure to the interview is called an interview schedule (De Vos et al 2005:308; Patton, 2002:343). The purpose of an interview schedule is to ensure that the same questions are asked of each person interviewed. For this study the researcher set questions which would provide her with the following information:

- Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners;

- the nature of the training Grade R teachers received on the issue of creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;

- the challenges Grade R teachers are currently experiencing in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;

- strategies currently employed by the participants for dealing with these challenges.

The interview schedule was given to each participant for perusal before the focus group interview commenced. The focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview were closed by thanking the participants for their time and participation.

3.4 2 Observation by using field notes

Field notes are a written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and observes during the course of the interview, and they contribute towards the

richness of the data. Taking notes during fieldwork is essential because it provides the researcher with a record of significant observations, for example, anxiety, which are reflected nonverbally in facial expressions and gestures which cannot be captured on audiotape recordings (De Vos et al 2005:311). In this study the researcher also used field notes (Appendix H) to capture the following:

- seating arrangements;
- the order in which the participants spoke in order to aid voice recognition and
- non-verbal information such as eye contact, posture, and gestures between group members that could not be recorded.

3.5   DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSING

The analysis and interpretation of focus group data can be very complex and time consuming (De Vos et al 2005:311). Bogdan & Biklen (2003:148) state that data analysis is a process of systematically searching for and arranging the interview scripts, field notes and any other materials collected by the researcher. Patton (2002:114) points out that the type of research which is being done will determine how the data should be analysed and how the findings should be presented. As noted in section 3.4.1, data were collected by means of a semi-structured focus group interview and a follow-up focus group interview with purposively selected participants from selected schools. The data comprise the responses of the participants interviewed. The researcher was guided by Lincoln and Guba's strategies, cited in De Vos et al (2005:346) to ensure reliability, validity and trustworthiness. These strategies are (1) assembling and organising data, (2) method of data analysis, and (3) reporting the findings.

3.5.1 Assembling and organising data

The focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The data assembled in the field notes were

47

organised into personal and analytical logs. A personal log is a descriptive report on the participants, their settings and field notes. An analytical log is a detailed investigation of the research question as the study progresses (Rubin & Babbie 1993:384; Taylor 1993:63). De Vos et al (2005:339) point out that organising data is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collected.

3.5.2 Method of data analysis

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001:138), methods of data analysis range from simple vote counting methods to sophisticated interactive qualitative methods such as ethnography, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory and critical studies. In qualitative research data collection and data analysis must be a synchronised process (Creswell1994:166). During the data analysis process keywords were consolidated into categories and categories were consolidated into emerging themes. These were cross-referenced with the research question to ensure that the research was focused.

3.5.3 Reporting the findings

The most common form of reporting findings for qualitative data is narrative text (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:20). Therefore, the results obtained from this study were presented as a narrative discussion rather than a scientific report.

3.6 VERIFICATION

McMillan & Schumacher (2001:407) state that the concepts of reliability and validity are indices of the trustworthiness of data. Validity and reliability are discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.6.1 Validity

According to Mason (2002:24), validity in research means that the relevant measurement is demonstrable from the research. Furthermore, validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world.

With regard to the validity of the research design, McMillan & Schumacher (2001:409) point out that qualitative research is based on assumptions and employs a variety of designs and methods to develop knowledge. Thus, the validity of qualitative design depends on matters of ethics and feasibility. The researcher must, as far as is humanly possible, be unbiased when analysing the data and presenting the findings. Furthermore, as McMillan & Schumacher (2001:404) say, the validity of qualitative research depends on the degree to which the meanings and connotations are shared by the participant and the researcher. To enhance validity of this research study, the following strategies were used: persistent field work, verbatim participants' accounts, low inference descriptors and mechanically recorded data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:404).

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the data. The research should yield the same results if conducted by a different researcher or by the same researcher at different times (De Vos et al 2005:120). In this study, the researcher tried to ensure the reliability of the findings by resorting to observation during the focus group interviews by means of field notes that strengthens reliability. Furthermore, the process of data collection and analysis was reported in detail in order to assure a clear and accurate representation of the methods used in this research .

3.7   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In South Africa a code of ethics that provides ethical research guidelines has been compiled by the Human Sciences Research Council (Du Plooy 2000:115). This code of ethics emphasises four ethical principles, namely, obtaining consent, avoiding harm, protecting privacy and maintaining integrity. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001:196), the ethical considerations which the researcher needs to take into account are the following: informed consent, approval, confidentiality, anonymity, feedback and honesty. These ethical considerations were taken into account by the researcher before and during the course of this research.

3.7.1   Informed consent

Diener and Crandal cited in Cohen et al (2002:51) define informed consent as the procedure whereby individuals choose whether to participate in any investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions. This enables the participants to decide if they want to participate in the research study or not. McMillan & Schumacher (2001:197) state that informed consent is achieved by providing others with clarification regarding the aims of the research and an opportunity to cease their participation at any time with no consequences, as well as full disclosure of any risks related to the study. Denzin & Lincoln (2000:372) emphasise that extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to participants.

The participants involved in this study were approached personally. They received the correct facts and information from the researcher about the aims of the study, the time anticipated for their participation, the place where the focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview would be conducted and the role of the researcher. Furthermore, they were assured that their personal beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad would be treated with ethical care. They therefore understood what was involved and could make an

informed decision whether to participate in the research study or not. In addition, the final analysis of data was made available for each participant to review.

3.7.2 Approval

Before any data were collected the researcher obtained written consent from the Provincial Administration, Department of Education at Pietermaritzburg to conduct the research (Appendix A). Written approval was also sought from the school principals of the three schools. Individual oral permission to audiotape the focus group interview and the follow-up focus group interview was obtained from all the participants.

3.7.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

McMillan & Schumacher (2001:198) maintain that one of the most important principles of concern with regard to research is confidentiality and anonymity. Information obtained must be treated as confidential. This means that no-one has access to the original data except the researcher. All the names of the schools and the names of the participants have been protected. No identification has been indicated. The Grade R teachers are referred to by numbers and the three primary schools are referred to as School A, School B and School C.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research design and the rationale for using the qualitative research approach was explained. Research methods and techniques used to collect data for this study were elucidated. This chapter also included the criteria for validity and reliability as components of trustworthiness as well as the ethical requirements, and how these were attended to in this research study.

In the following chapter, the research data gathered by means of the empirical investigation will be analysed, interpreted and presented.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research design using a qualitative research approach was explained. In this chapter, the researcher will present and discuss the findings. Analysing, presenting and discussing the data were directed by specific aims of this research. These aims are the following:

- to determine the perceptions of Grade R teachers in the Isipingo District regarding an unbiased classroom environment;
- to discuss the nature of training that the participating Grade R teachers received for creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;
- to identify the challenges that these grade R teachers are currently experiencing in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;
- to identify the strategies that these Grade R teachers are currently using in order to deal with the challenges that they are experiencing and
- to recommend additional strategies by the researcher to deal with the challenges.

4.2   RESEARCH DESIGN IN BRIEF

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a qualitative research approach was used since the primary aim was to investigate and uncover the perceptions of Grade R teachers regarding an unbiased classroom environment. In this regard, the relevant training of the participating Grade R teachers, the challenges that they face and the strategies that they use to promote unbiased classroom environments were investigated.

Data were collected using a focus group interview involving nine Grade R teachers; three teachers from each of three different public multicultural primary schools (School A, School B and School C). These schools are situated in the Isipingo District, (KZN). The same participants were used to conduct the follow-up focus group interview.

Content analysis was done in accordance with the research questions and the aims of the research. The analysis of the data occurred in three interwoven phases: (1) reading and managing or organising the data according to keywords; (2) identifying categories or sub-themes by consolidating keywords; and (3) formulating main themes by consolidating categories or sub-themes. The researcher was also guided by Guba's strategies, cited in De Vos et al (2005:346), namely, (1) assembling and organising the data; (2) analysing the data; and (3) reporting the findings.

The first phase began with an inventory of what data were available after the focus group interview had been transcribed and the data organised. Keywords were used to organise the data. According to De Vos et al *(*2005:336), organising data means reading through the raw data and going back to the participants if additional data have to be collected. In this study, the researcher did go back to the participants in order to collect additional, more enriched data from them by means of a follow-up focus group interview. The data were analysed according to the questions in the interview schedule (see Appendix E). Data (keywords) from one question that related to another question were moved to the relevant question to be used in the discussion of the data.

After managing and organising the data according to keywords, the researcher proceeded to phase two which was to generate categories (sub-themes) from the identified keywords. The sub-themes and patterns that emerged from the data were internally consistent but distinct from one another (De Vos et al 2005:338). During this phase the researcher immersed herself in the details and tried to get a

sense of the interview as a whole before identifying the main themes in phase three.

In the last phase, phase three, themes were identified by consolidating sub-themes. This phase is the "heart of qualitative data analysis", according to De Vos et al (2005:338) and therefore a challenging phase. In this phase, the researcher searched for meaningful themes. Salient themes, that is, recurring ideas and patterns of belief that could be linked together, were integrated.

The organisation of the data issued forth into four main research themes which also reflected questions from the interview schedule, namely, (1) Grade R teachers' understanding of the concepts "anti-bias/unbiased"; (2) participants' training opportunities for creating and managing unbiased classroom environments; (3) challenges Grade R teachers are experiencing in order to create and manage unbiased classroom environments; and (4) strategies currently employed to deal with these challenges.

The table below is a summary of the analyzing process:

TABLE 2: ANALYSING THE DATA

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
Reading and managing or organising the data using keywords,	Identifying categories or sub-themes by consolidating keywords	Formulating 4 main themes by consolidating categories or subheadings

The discussion and interpretation of data were guided by Riehl's model for analyzing anti-bias classroom environments as well as by the literature review set out in chapter 2.

4.3   PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this research were organised into four main themes. These four main themes are (1) Grade R teachers' understanding of the concept "anti-bias/unbiased"; (2) participants' training opportunities; (3) challenges Grade R teachers are currently experiencing in establishing and maintaining unbiased classroom environments; and (4) strategies currently employed to deal with these challenges.

4.3.1 Grade R teachers' understanding of an unbiased classroom environment

In qualitative research, the exploration of the participants' perceptions is important because it is the point of departure of such research. In the research reported here, the intention was to find out what the participants' understanding and perceptions of unbiased classroom environments were. All nine participants revealed that they had heard of the term "anti-bias/unbiased". A 55 year old participant with twenty years teaching practice stated that she thinks it means to be fair because then a teacher is treating all cultural groups equally. Other participants said that they think it means to treat boys and girls fairly and not to favour anyone, that is, to treat all learners equally. One participant, a 30 year old teacher with six years teaching practice interpreted it as follows: "I think it refers to how poor or rich children are treated."

From the participants' responses, it became clear that the participants do have an idea of the meaning of the concepts "anti-bias" and "unbiased". However, they are not aware of the depth of the different aspects, principles and characteristics of these concepts. According to Lemmer et al (2008:4), the concepts are directly linked to multicultural education. The concepts "anti-bias" and "unbiased" mean no preference is given to any cultural, racial, language, religious and/or ethnic group

(Meier 2007:119). Thus, the concepts refer to the acknowledgement that different cultural groups exist and each must be recognised and accepted and cultures which differ from one's own culture must not be judged. An anti-bias/unbiased approach promotes cultural preservation and acculturation as well as respect for the equal rights of all cultural groups.

According to Lemmer et al (2008:4), multicultural education recognises and accepts the rightful existence of different cultural groups, encourages acculturation and cultural preservation, views cultural diversity as a asset rather than a disability and acknowledges the equal rights of all cultural groups in a society (see section 2.2.2). None of the participants mentioned any of these principles of multicultural education and they did not know how to apply them in order to create an unbiased classroom environment. It was therefore clear that the participants lack in-depth understanding of the concepts "anti-bias" and "unbiased" and that these concepts are interwoven with the concept "diversity" and the principles of multicultural education.

4.3.2 Participants' training opportunities

In order to support Grade R teachers' attempts to create unbiased classroom environments, it was important to determine whether they had received any training that addressed the issue of an unbiased classroom environment. Therefore, it was required from the participants to explain the nature of their training. In this regard, six out of the nine participants had not received any training for creating and managing anti-bias/unbiased classroom environments nor for multicultural education. The other three participants indicated that they had received such training. Their training is set out below.

A 35 year old participant with training in Early Childhood Education and three years teaching experience indicated that the course content of the lectures that she had

attended on a Saturday at the Coastal College in Mobeni, (KZN) addressed some anti-bias issues.

Another participant, a 30 year old woman who holds a diploma in Education with six years teaching experience, was trained by the New Beginning Training and Development Organisation. Her programme included multicultural education and touched briefly on anti-bias related problems. She also gained relevant information by "… asking other teachers on the staff."

The third participant, a 44 year old woman who holds a diploma in Education and has five years teaching experience, stated that she had also attended lectures in Mobeni, as had the first participant referred to above. Her training was provided by the Department of Education, and during her four years of part-time studies anti-bias issues were addressed.

The fact that only one third of all the participants had received some training in anti-bias issues is explained by Mazibuko's (2006:69) statement that the development and training programmes currently offered by South African universities focus on other content and not on issues of race, language and ethnicity (see section 2.3). The current training programmes seldom introduce multicultural, multilingual and non-racial teaching experiences. Mazibuko (2006:69) also says that direct experiential training of pre-service student teachers in townships, rural, suburban and farm schools could help them to become culturally competent. James et al (2006:688) support Mazibuko's view when they maintain that every student teacher doing teaching practice at schools should teach at multicultural schools. Meier (2005:171) points out that teacher training programmes in South Africa focus on some content of intercultural understanding, but that this may not be enough to change attitudes and, furthermore, does not give the support teachers need in order to create and manage unbiased classroom environments.

Further research done by Marais & Meier (2008:184-197) provides evidence that students who had completed their teacher training programmes still lack in-depth knowledge of and insight into the complex phenomenon of multicultural education and all its aspects. Teachers lack awareness of and sensitivity to the aims of multicultural education. Even after completing a module in multicultural education the participants who are able to submit clearly identifiable examples of applying the basic principles of unbiased teaching are rare exceptions.

The research findings showed that six out of nine teachers did not receive any training in unbiased issues and that the other three participants did not receive enough training to establish unbiased classroom environments in their schools. Therefore one can conclude that they may not be able to create and manage unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners.

4.3.3 Challenges Grade R teachers are currently experiencing with regard to an unbiased classroom environment

The third theme that arose from the data gathered via the focus group interview with nine Grade R teachers as participants dealt with the challenges that they were experiencing in their efforts to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. It was important to ascertain the challenges that these Grade R educators are currently experiencing in order to suggest strategies which could be used to address such challenges.

4.3.3.1   *The reality of stereotypes*

A 50 year old participant with twenty-five years teaching experience stated that the most common challenge is that teachers tend to segregate boys and girls. Such segregation is also practiced by the community who allocate certain duties to boys and other duties to girls. According to this participant, segregation of boys and girls are reinforced by the parents who also uphold gender differences in their

upbringing of their children. This, of course, makes it difficult to put and end to gender stereotyping.

The above participant's response agrees with the reality of stereotypes as pointed out by Marilyn Lopes (2004:1), a specialist in Family Life Education at the University of Massachusetts (see section 2.2.3). The existence of diversity opens the door to stereotyping despite the fact that cultural generalisations are mostly based on erroneous information or postulations rather than on facts (Lopes 2004:2). Thus, when subjective value judgements cloud one's view of an ethnic group, unrealistic stereotyping occurs. This leads to a denial of an individual's uniqueness, the uniqueness which forms the basis of his/her essential humanity (Vally & Dalamba 1999:67). This is a problem also recognised by Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html). According to her, stereotyping occurs everywhere and at all times. It should be recognised as such and although teachers do not always know what to do, they must at least realise that something should be done about it. Learners cannot be protected from the realities of life. Teachers must, however, help them to develop skills such as critical thinking and activism in order to engender respect for diversity (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html).

The findings of this research as well as the literature review revealed that stereotyping still exists. There are still teachers who promote activities only for boys and activities only for girls in the Isipingo District, (KZN). It is therefore clear that some teachers are still not aware that stereotyping obstructs a teacher's ability to interrelate with learners. From the statements made by the 50 year old participant, referred to above, it seems as if her co-teachers do not make the necessary attempts to end gender stereotyping in their classrooms.

4.3.3.2   The problem of learners speaking different languages in the same classroom

A 43 year old participant with twenty years teaching experience mentioned that learners speaking different languages in the same classroom contribute to the fact that she is unable to establish an unbiased classroom environment. Her wall posters are in English and not in the mother tongues of the learners. According to this participant a general perception exists that competence in the English language ". . . sets one above the rest." This response agrees with the findings of Goduka (1998:36) that English is perceived as a language of power in South Africa, and worldwide, and that English monolingualism is viewed as an asset. Those who speak a language other than English in school settings are generally viewed as having a problem that needs to be corrected (see section 2.2.7).

Furthermore, a 44 year old participant with five years teaching experience admitted that it is difficult to communicate with learners who do not understand English due to the fact that they speak other languages. The parents of these learners, however, insist that their children be educated by means of English. This, according to the participant, is her biggest challenge.

The complexity of communication in a multicultural classroom environment is discussed in literature. Lemmer et al (2008:36-37) point out that it is seldom possible to achieve perfect conformity between the aim of communication as set by the teacher and the response he/she desires from the learners (see section 2.2.7). Teachers have to do more that just plan what they want to communicate to the learners. They have to consider the learners' limited English proficiency and formulate their words in such a way that learners will interpret them as intended. If not, communication failure and miscommunication are inevitable.

Clauss-Ehlers (2006:67) also discusses the problem of speaking different languages in the same classroom. Language is used by teachers to "create a

space to respond, relate, and analyze the verbalizations that the individual reveals." Because language is the primary tool for teaching and learning, the creation of an unbiased classroom environment is especially challenging with learners of various mother tongues (see section 2.2.7).

Language reflects culture and through language learners experience their culture, their world and themselves. Cultural expression has implications for the creation of an unbiased classroom environment. The classroom environment should maximise opportunities for all learners to speak. If the learners have different home languages in the same classroom, involving all the learners as active participants in the lesson and/or learning activity is a major challenge. Nonlinguistic material, such as pictures, toys and graphs, can be used to promote understanding (Clauss-Ehlers 2006:71-72).

Riehl also acknowledged language diversity as a problem, but also as a reality that must be dealt with because the world is diverse and therefore all people need to learn to cope with language diversity (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html).

In the Isipingo district, (KZN), the languages mostly used are English, Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. From the participants' response regarding the parents' insistence that their children be educated by means of English it is clear that the communication problem originates from the reality of South Africa's language diversity. This is therefore a fundamental problem in South African schools.

4.3.3.3   Teachers' ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups

A 43 year old Grade R teacher with twenty years teaching practice ascribed her inability to create an unbiased classroom environment to her own ignorance on the nature of the diverse cultural groups in her class. She admitted that she does ". . . not know enough about the different cultural groups in my class to create and

62

manage an unbiased classroom environment." Another remark from this participant was: "I haven't been trained in anti-bias skills. How will I know what materials to choose to create an unbiased classroom environment?" This participant also stated the following: ". . . I have not been trained to teach multicultural classes but … I am forced to do just that." Furthermore, she argued that it is difficult for her to establish and manage an unbiased classroom environment because she had no training in designing a variety of teaching materials that would address the needs of the different cultural groups in her classroom.

Another participant, a 44 year old Grade R teacher with five years teaching experience, admitted that her biggest challenge is that, although she knows that the needs of learners with disabilities should be included if an unbiased classroom environment is to be created, she does not know how to do this because she had never been trained in this matter.

The above responses indicate that the participants do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. In fact, all the responses of the participants indicated a seriously deficient conception of the nature, aims and principles of multicultural education and a lack of knowledge on how to establish an unbiased classroom environment.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Marais & Meier (2008:184-197). According to Marais & Meier (2008), the majority of South African teachers are not fully aware of the cultural factors that exert an important influence on the teaching and learning process (see section 2.3). Teachers lack in-depth and enriched knowledge of the principles of multicultural education. Meier (2005:26) recommends that teacher training programmes should include compulsory courses on multicultural education. Student teachers should learn to assess their perceptions of learners from diverse backgrounds and the theoretical framework of a multicultural education course should help student teachers to develop the

necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills that would equip them to teach effectively in culturally diverse classrooms.

4.3.3.4   Learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism)

A 35 year old participant with three years teaching experience stated that some learners do not respect teachers or learners from other cultural groups. She specifically referred to learners in her class who do not respect female teachers: "… in their [the learners'] culture they are taught not to respect ladies."

Another participant, a 44 year old Grade R teacher with five years teaching experience, remarked that the learners in her class do not like Indian teachers and therefore "… don't respect Indian teachers."

A 40 year old participant with four years teaching experience said that learners do not respect other learners from different cultures. When the participant enquired why a learner was crying she was told that "… an Indian girl had pinched the child." The learners said that the Indian girl did not like Blacks and "… hits all the Black children in the class." The participant emphasised that such episodes makes it very difficult for her to create an unbiased classroom environment. Furthermore, she said, the prejudiced learners ignore all teaching material of cultures other than their own. She admitted that she do not know how to overcome the learners' cultural prejudice.

Another participant, a 40 year old teacher with four years teaching experience confirmed that learners from different cultures do not always like each other and "… are racist." Another participant who is also experiencing this problem replied that she thinks they are racist because their parents set an example of racism.

Kohli (2008:2) is a literature source that supports the above mentioned perceptions of the participants (see section 2.2.5). Teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity or

class, experience racism in schools. The participants' responses are also supported by a report that was compiled by the South Australian Department for Education (http://www.info.gov.za). Lemmer et al (2008:24) maintain that racism is based on the belief that one's own race is superior to others and learners are aware of racial differences by the time they enter school. It is the responsibility of teachers to address racism in the classroom so that learners can learn to respect different cultures. This is in line with on of the principles of unbiased classroom environments that is set out by Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html), namely to provide a culturally appropriate, historically accurate and non-stereotypical classroom environment where everyone respects one another.

Only one participant, a 35 year old grade R teacher with three years teaching experience did not agree that learners are disrespectful. She said that her Grade R learners do show respect to the teachers. She, however, did not substantiate her statement.

On the whole, the participants' responses indicate that learners and their families seem to lack sensitivity towards cultural differences. The result is that the learners are disrespectful towards and intolerant of the cultural identity of Grade R teachers and fellow learners. This conclusion indicates that learners can be blatantly racists, actively trying to provoke conflict. This is a matter of great concern and a real challenge for Grade R teachers. According to some of the participants, the example set by families could possibly be the reason why learners tend to be disrespectful towards their teachers and their peers. If parents do not respect the values and convictions of other cultures, their children will also not respect diversity. This constitutes a big obstacle for teachers in their attempts to establish an unbiased classroom environment where learners of all cultural backgrounds can learn in a stable and friendly environment.

It is clear from the research findings that teachers do not always have the knowledge and skills to teach learners not to discriminate against others and to respect cultural differences. Teachers also do not know how to teach learners how to respond when others discriminate against them.

4.3.3.5   *Teachers' prejudice and discrimination*

A 40 year old participant with four years teaching experience stated that overcoming her own prejudice is her most important challenge in order to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. She admitted: "Sometimes I discriminate against learners in terms of social backgrounds. Learners who are neat and come from middle class families are given more attention in class." This same respondent said that another challenge for her is to deal fairly with learners who experience poor living conditions at home. These learners lack ordinary hygiene and she feels she does not want to teach them. She bluntly acknowledged that "… our learners live in shacks. They come to school with very poor hygiene. Some come with sores, scabies and running noses. This puts me off." This participant is an excellent example of a prejudiced teacher.

Literature study (see section 2.2.4) reveals that prejudices are impressions, indications, ideas and attitudes about other people and situations that are shaped before having full, or at least sufficient, relevant information (Gordon & Browne 2010:559). In other words, others are judged on a basis of prior experiences, learned stereotypes and internalised belief systems (Clauss-Ehlers 2006:51).

According to Vally & Dalamba (1999:67), all people have preferences and dislikes, and no matter how hard one tries, there are persistent stereotypes that tend to creep into one's thoughts every so often (see section 2.2.6.4).

Although it is a universal principle and a basic human right of every individual not to be subjected to discrimination, this research study showed that teachers

themselves are sometimes prejudiced and sometimes even practice active discrimination against some learners. Prejudice is revealed against poverty and poor hygiene. This is a most disturbing finding. Teachers must support learners from poor families in the same way that they support other learners and teachers should never discriminate against learners. If a teacher is prejudiced in any way, be it social background, racial and/or cultural prejudice, he/she must overcome it.

The participating teachers' responses discussed in the previous sections of this chapter revealed the five most common challenges that they are currently experiencing, namely (1) the reality of stereotypes; (2) learners speaking different languages in the same classroom; (3) teachers' own ignorance about the nature of different cultural groups in classrooms; (4) learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism); and (5) teachers' prejudice and discrimination.

As stated in section 1.4 one of the aims of the research was to investigate the current strategies that Grade R teachers are using to address the challenges of creating and managing unbiased classroom environments. Therefore, the next section deals with the strategies currently employed by them.

4.3.4 Strategies currently employed by Grade R teachers to deal with the identified challenges

One of the questions in the interview schedule dealt with strategies Grade R teachers are applying in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments. The participants identified the following strategies:

4.3.4.1 Addressing the reality of stereotypes

A 30 year old participant with six years teaching experience stated that she frequently chooses storybooks that concerned children of different races as well as books with no gender bias, for example, women and men doing the same kind of work. Another participant, a 44 year old Grade R teacher with five years teaching

experience indicated that she usually includes activities that are of interest for both boys and girls. This participant said that activities should not be labeled as "… boy or girl activities." Moreover, a 64 year old participant with thirty years teaching experience mentioned that she involves both boys and girls in all games. In her classroom, according to her, there are no games for boys or girls only. This strategy is also used by another participant.

These three teachers encourage learners to take part in any activity and/or game, irrespective of their gender. This is in accordance with Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html) who states that educators should not differentiate between boys and girls (see section 2.5.4.3).

These three participants are however, the only participants who had a strategy in place to guard against gender stereotyping. The other six participants' lack of knowledge and inability to draw up and implement a strategy which combats gender stereotyping is a matter which needs to be addressed in the Grade R classes of the Isipingo District, (KZN).

4.3.4.2   Addressing different languages in the same classroom

A 35 year old participant with three years teaching experience pointed out that in her classroom labels on containers, doors and boxes are written in more than one language, namely, in all the languages spoken by the learners in her class.

Only this one participant had addressed this issue in her class. None of the other participants reflected on classroom strategies that would enable them to cope with the problem of having learners with different mother tongues in the same classroom.

According to Clauss-Ehlers (2006:67), learners experience their world through language and language is the medium used to explain their world. Language gives meaning to life as no other medium can (see section 2.2.7).

From one respondent's remarks, it appeared that she has a very simplistic understanding of dealing with language diversity. She could not provide examples of strategies that could be used to address the problem of diverse mother tongues in a grade R class. The other participants did not comment on strategies for the language problem.

4.3.4.3   Addressing teachers' ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups in the same classroom

A 30 year old participant with six years teaching experience revealed that she is aware of her own lack of knowledge about different cultures. She testified that she has been studied the different cultural customs of learners in her classroom, and her aim is to establish an unbiased classroom environment. Her study of different cultural customs, she said, helps her to understand the learners in her classroom. Several of the other participants suggested that the Department of Education should present workshops which could support them and help them in their efforts to create an unbiased classroom environment.

Although several of the other participants had thought about the reality of different cultural groups in one classroom, none of them could pinpoint ways in which they could improve their knowledge of multicultural education and thereby acquire the necessary skills to create an appropriate, unbiased classroom environment. They did not acknowledge the value of in-service training or the value of attending national and international conferences. It is clear from their responses that the participants are unaware of their responsibility to equip themselves with in-depth knowledge of all types of social and cultural diversity.

4.3.4.4   Addressing learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism)

In order to address learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers, a 43 year old participant with twenty years teaching experience said that she usually displays beautiful pictures of different race groups in her classroom. Her aim, she said, is to change learners' negative attitudes towards other learners by engendering a better understanding of other race groups. One of the other participants said that she makes dolls representing different race groups and these dolls depict positive characteristics that are found in all people. A 44 year old participant with five years teaching experience pointed out that she uses books with stories of children from all cultural groups. A 35 year old participant with three years teaching experience maintained that teachers should consider putting up posters in their classrooms which depict the uniqueness of different cultures. She mentioned that she has displays in her classroom which include artifacts from various cultural groups. Furthermore, she said, she also displays different types of homes in her classroom. Another participant, a 30 year old participant with six years teaching experience also chooses decorative classroom material that reflects the learners' cultures. She mentioned that she has "... a chart of the different eye colours … in her class in order to promote mutual respect." To enhance respect in her classroom environment, another participant, a 36 year old Grade R teacher with three years teaching experience displays different cultural clothing.

The teachers' strategies described above are in accordance with relevant literature. For example, Van der Merwe (2000:31-32) maintains that educational philosophy and methodology include a recommendation that teachers should display pictures of children from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds in order to engender respect for diversity. The classroom environment must reflect the cultures of the learners. Books and other teaching material should reflect racial and cultural diversity to avoid racism (see section 2.2.5).

Although only five of the nine participants took an active part in the discussion of this matter, it seems as if they all endorse the value of engendering respect for multiculturalism and thus creating an unbiased classroom environment. It was clear from the participants' responses that they are trying to address this problem.

4.3.4.5   Addressing teachers' prejudice and discrimination

None of the participants was able to identify or explain ways to eliminate prejudice and discrimination that teachers are currently displayed. This is a sad and rather embarrassing revelation, because teachers are supposed to be role models for learners. It can be concluded that all nine participants lack important skills, knowledge and attitudes to address the challenge of managing unbiased classroom environments.

4.3.4.6   Addressing teaching media in the classroom

Although the participants did not regard teaching media as a challenge, some of them acknowledged the important role that teaching media plays. However, they were very vague about the ways in which they are using teaching media to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. The following were mentioned but not explained in detail:

- pictures of different race groups;
- dolls representing different race groups;
- books with stories of children from different races;
- labels in classes which were written in different languages;
- mixed groups when playing games;
- theme based lessons like a "kitchen Zulu" and
- different cultural clothing to be demonstrated in some lessons.

As already mentioned above, the participants could not explain the above listed strategies. One can therefore conclude that the participants did not really

understand the important role that these and other, strategies play in establishing and managing an unbiased classroom environment where effective teaching and learning should take place. They merely mentioned using pictures and charts displayed with pictures of Black, White, Coloured and Indian learners. Dolls were also mentioned but no indication or explanation was given with regard to the value thereof. Books of different cultures and in different languages, shapes and colours were also mentioned. The participants did not, however, explain how and for what purpose they are using them. One participant revealed that her school has no books due to financial constraints. Gordon & Browne (2010:32), however, maintain that the lack of financial resources should not be seen as a limitation since equipment can be borrowed, made or purchased second-hand through fund-raising.

There is consistent evidence that the participants do not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of an unbiased classroom environment and they therefore need to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to empower them in the creating and managing safe and unbiased classroom environment.

4.4   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the data that were obtained through a focus group interview and a follow-up focus group interview with nine Grade R teachers from the Isipingo District. The interview concerned their perceptions of an unbiased classroom environment, the nature of their training, the challenges that they are experiencing and the strategies they are applying to address these challenges. The data and findings were interpreted against Riehl's model (see section 2.5.4) as well as against other literature. The last chapter focuses on a summary of the literature review and the empirical investigation. Recommendations based on the findings will also be given.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The aims of this research were to

- determine Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments;
- discuss the nature of training that Grade R teachers received for creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;
- identify the challenges that Grade R teachers are currently experiencing in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments;
- determine the strategies currently employed by Grade R teachers to deal with these challenges
- suggest additional strategies for dealing with such challenges.

The Isipingo District, (KZN) still faces many challenges regarding unbiased Grade R classroom environments. It is therefore important that school principals, Grade R teachers, parents of Grade R learners and School Governing Bodies in the district have a clear understanding of the nature and characteristics of an unbiased classroom environment for Grade R learners. They must also understand the principles and benefits of multicultural education in general and that of an unbiased classroom environment in particular. Problems that arise should be identified and the responsibilities that are entailed should be accepted by all the relevant role players. Thus, the purpose of this final chapter is to present a summary of the research and to make recommendations based upon the research findings. In addition, recommendations for further research are also provided.

5.2   SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter provides a short summary of the research study, additional recommendations regarding strategies and suggestions for further research.

In chapter 1 the basis for this study was provided. Section 1.1 introduced the study while section 1.2 explained the rationale behind it. The main research question, *(What are Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners in the Isipingo District?)* and the sub-problems were formulated in section 1.3. In light of this problem statement, the aims of this study, given in section 1.4, were to determine the participating Grade R teachers' perceptions of unbiased classroom environments and to identify the challenges they are experiencing in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments in the Isipingo District as well as to determine the strategies they are currently employing in order to create and manage unbiased classroom environments for Grade R learners. Another aim was to recommend additional strategies by the researcher for dealing with these challenges.

Important definitions and concepts used in the research were set out in section 1.5. The demarcation of the research was indicated in section 1.6 and in section 1.7. An overview of the research design, which was informed by a qualitative research approach, was given. An outline of the dissertation in terms of chapter divisions was provided in section 1.8.

The literature review was set out in chapter two and issued forth in discussions of the nature and characteristics of multicultural education (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) as well as various aspects and concepts, such as stereotypes, prejudice and racism (see sections 2.2.3 - 2.2.5). Laws and policies related to diversity in South African schools (see section 2.2.6) as well as the challenges posed by learners with different home languages in the same classroom (see section 2.2.7) were also

included. Literature regarding the training of teachers for multicultural education was explained in section 2.3.

A literature review pertaining to Grade R learners and unbiased classroom environments was also conducted. Information about Grade R learners was set out in section 2.4 and a discussion on creating and managing unbiased Grade R classroom environment was inserted in section 2.5. Section 2.5 was sub-divided into the planning of an unbiased Grade R classroom environment (see section 2.5.1), different areas in the Grade R classroom (see section 2.5.2) and the classroom culture (see section 2.5.3). Riehl's model for analysing whether a classroom environment is an anti-bias learning environment was also discussed in section 2.5.4. The five principles of Riehl's model for analyzing whether a classroom environment is an anti-bias learning environment was also discussed in section 2.5.4.

In chapter 3 the research design and methodology were explained. The elements of a qualitative methodology were described (see section 3.3.1). The researcher chooses to use a focus group interview as well as a follow-up focus group interview supported by field notes gained from observation during the focus group interviews. These data collection strategies were discussed in section 3.4. The researcher explained how the interview was conducted and recorded (see section 3.4.1.3) as well as the structure of the interview schedule (see section 3.4.1.4). In section 3.5 data processing and analysis were explained. The researcher applied Guba's three strategies of trustworthiness, namely (1) assembling and organising data; (2) the method of data analysis; and (3) reporting the findings. Verification was discussed in section 3.6.

The data obtained from the participants were carefully analysed in chapter 4. Themes found in the data were linked to the literature study as well as to Riehl's model for unbiased classroom environments.

This chapter also contains a summary of the literature review (see section 5.2.1) and the empirical investigation (section 5.2.2). Several recommendations (see section 5.3) as well as recommendations for further research (see section 5.4) are made. Limitations of the study (see section 5.5) are explained and the concluding remarks of the study are presented in section 5.6. Below is the summary of the literature review.

5.2.1 Literature review

The review of literature included a review of the nature and characteristics of multicultural education (see section 2.2.1). Although the focus of this dissertation is not on multicultural education as such, an unbiased classroom environment cannot be understood without knowledge of the characteristics of and basic conditions for effective multicultural education. Specific definitions of multicultural education vary widely. It can be defined as, "the transferring of the recognition of our pluralistic society into our education system. Furthermore, multicultural education is the operationalising of the education system in such a fashion that it includes all racial and cultural groups. Therefore, multicultural education must be regarded as a process which guides the total education enterprise" (Lemmer et al 2008:3-4). Trumpelmann (1999:30) defines multicultural education as "a particular ethos of openness, empathy, mutual respect and human dignity … transforming every aspect of the school atmosphere."

In section 2.2.2 the characteristics of multicultural education were mentioned. Aspects such as cultural preservation and acculturation, mutual cooperation and interaction, a positive attitude towards cultural diversity, equal rights for all cultural groups and promotion of equal educational opportunities were explained.

The literature review also issued forth in a discussion on stereotypes, prejudice, racism and laws and policies on how to deal with diversity in South African schools (see sections 2.2.3 - 2.2.6). The language barrier in multicultural schools was also

addressed in the literature review (see section 2.2.7). Teachers not only have to plan what they want to communicate to the learners through language, but they also have to consider the learners' needs and hence design messages in such a way that learners interpret them as the teacher intended. If not, communication failure and miscommunication are inevitable. Clauss-Ehlers (2006:67) agrees that different languages in the same classroom are problematic, and that it is indeed a challenge to create an unbiased classroom environment if there are learners with various mother tongues.

As mentioned in section 2.3, literature on the training of teachers regarding multicultural education was explained. Mazibuko (2006:69) maintains that the current development and training programmes offered by South African universities focus on content which is rarely linked to race, language and ethnicity. The training programmes seldom offer multicultural, multilingual and non-racial teaching experiences. Furthermore, research conducted by Marais & Meier (2008:194-195) also provide evidence that teacher training programmes do not prepare students to teach in multicultural schools.

The Grade R learner was discussed in section 2.4 and literature dealing with creating and managing an unbiased grade R classroom environment was indicated in section 2.5. A well-planned classroom environment (see section 2.5.1) is a very powerful tool that can be used as "a knowledge building instrument" that will help to promote diversity (Derman-Sparks, 1989:33). Different areas are assigned in the Grade R classroom (see section 2.5.2). The design of such areas may foster or discourage imaginary play, social interaction and independence (Gordon & Browne, 2010:301-302). Such areas are a fantasy play area, a book area, a writing table, a block area, a toys and games area, a creative art area and a discovery table (Gordon & Browne 2010:347-348). All these areas need to be unbiased and the teacher must focus on collecting multicultural materials, which may take a period of time.

Classroom culture (see section 2.5.3) is formed by the mixture of different cultures of the teacher and learners. This mixture of cultures is a microculture (Lemmer et al 2008:19). According to Hernandez cited in Lemmer et al (2008:19), teachers and learners bring their own set of experiences, values and beliefs into the classroom. Cultural transmission and socialisation then takes place in the classroom. The classroom culture is also an extension of the dominant school culture, and learners whose cultural backgrounds are different from the dominant school culture can experience cultural alienation and discontinuity.

The theoretical framework for this study was Riehl's model for analysing whether an anti-bias approach is reflected in a classroom environment (see section 2.5.4). Riehl (http://www.nncc.org/Diversity/sac26_anti-bias.analyz.html) identifies five principles for such analysis and thereby determine whether the classroom environment is educationally sound and unbiased. The five principles are (1) bias may be presented everyday and everywhere; (2) classroom environments are mirrors to self-esteem and learners need to develop a positive self-concept; (3) classroom environments are windows to diversity and balance; (4) classroom environments should be culturally appropriate, historically accurate and non-stereotypical; and (5) classroom environments should motivate learners to develop problem-solving skills through critical thinking.

5.2.2 Empirical investigation

The empirical investigation took the form of a focus group interview and one follow-up focus group interview with nine Grade R teachers from three schools in the Isipingo District, KZN. The data were analysed and interpreted according to four main themes, namely (1) Grade R teachers' understanding of the concepts "anti-bias" and "unbiased"; (2) participants' training opportunities; (3) challenges Grade R teachers are currently experiencing with regard to an unbiased classroom environment; and (4) strategies currently employed to deal with these challenges.

78

5.2.2.1 Grade R teachers' understanding of an unbiased classroom environment

From their responses, it is clear that the participants do not understand the meaning and value of the concepts "unbiased" and "anti-bias" (see section 4.3.1). Furthermore, none of the participants realised (1) that an unbiased classroom environment grants equal educational opportunities to all learners; (2) that bias can include any aspect of human difference, be it gender, disability, language, race, religion, cultural and traditional beliefs, customs and habits; and (3) that tolerance for such differences should be part of the teaching and learning process because it leads to effective teaching. It is clear from their responses that the participants are not aware of the different aspects, principles and characteristics of the concepts "anti-bias" and "unbiased". The participants lack in-depth understanding of these concepts and of their interwoveness with the concept "diversity" as well as the principles of multicultural education.

5.2.2.2 Participants' training opportunities

In order to support Grade R teachers and help them to create an unbiased classroom environment, it is important to know whether the training they received addressed the idea of creating an unbiased classroom environment. Therefore, one of the questions required the participants to explain the nature of their preparatory teacher training (see section 4.3.2). Six out of the nine participants pointed out that they had not received any training regarding creating and managing anti-bias classroom environments nor did they receive training in multicultural education. Only three participants indicated that they had received such training, but they also indicated that it was inadequate. They are thus still ill-prepared for the process of establishing unbiased classroom environments in their schools.

5.2.2.3 Challenges Grade R teachers are currently experiencing with regard to an unbiased classroom environment

The third theme that arose from the data gathered by means of the focus group interview with nine Grade R teachers dealt with the challenges these teachers are experiencing with regard to unbiased classroom environments (see section 4.3.3).

Reality of stereotypes

With regard to the reality of stereotypes (see section 4.3.3.1), this finding shows that there are still teachers who promote activities only for boys and activities only for girls. It is therefore clear that teachers are still not aware of stereotypes which may obstruct teachers' interrelationship with learners. It appeared that the teachers working with one of the participants has not yet adopted a more humble and tentative attitude towards their own ideas and judgements about individuals and/or groups of people, and, consequently, they do not create opportunities in their classrooms to address and eliminate stereotypes.

Learners speaking different languages in the same classroom

Regarding the problem of learners speaking different languages in the same classroom (see section 4.3.3.2) the respondents are clearly experiencing difficulties. The languages used in the Isipingo district are English, Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. The response of one participant made it clear there is a communication problem in her classroom which issues forth from the reality of South Africa's language diversity and that this is a fundamental problem in South African schools.

Teachers' own ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups in the same classroom

Teachers' own ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups in the same classroom (see section 4.3.3.3) is a serious problem in Grade R classes in the Isipingo District, (KZN). The fact that six out of the nine participants revealed that they had not received any training on how to establish and manage an anti-bias classroom environment or how to teach in multicultural schools and only three participants indicated that they had receive such training, but that it was inadequate, indicates that the participants do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. This finding shows that the participants' conception of the nature, aims and principles of multicultural education is deficient and they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish an unbiased classroom environment.

Learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism)

With regard to learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism) (see section 4.3.3.4), the finding revealed that learners and their families lack sensitivity towards cultural differences and the learners are thus often disrespectful and intolerant towards the cultural identities of Grade R teachers and fellow learners. The participants' responses indicated that learners can be blatantly racist and try to provoke conflict. This is a situation of great concern and an urgent challenge that faces Grade R teachers. According to some of the participants, the example set by families could possibly be the reason why learners tend to be disrespectful towards their teachers and their peers. If parents do not respect the values and convictions of other cultures, their children will also not respect diversity, and this hinders teachers' attempts to provide an unbiased classroom environment where learners of all cultural backgrounds intermingle in an educationally sound and warm, friendly learning environment. It became clear from the participating teachers' responses that they lack the knowledge and skills to teach learners that discrimination against

others is wrong and that they (the learners) should respect the cultural differences that exist in the classroom. These teachers also appeared to lack the knowledge necessary to teach learners the proper response when others discriminate against them.

Teachers' prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice as well as discrimination exercised by teachers (see section 4.3.3.5) was also revealed in the collected data. Although it is a universal principle and basic human right that no person should be discriminated against, the research findings showed that some teachers do nothing to combat prejudices, but may actually foster prejudice and discrimination against certain learners, especially the learners from poverty-stricken homes. This is a situation of great concern because teachers should support all learners equally, irrespective of their parents' economic status, and irrespective of other differences.

5.2.2.4   Strategies currently employed by Grade R teachers to deal with the identified challenges

Part of this research study was to ascertain what current strategies the participating Grade R teachers are employing to deal with the following challenges.

Addressing reality of stereotypes

It became reasonably clear from this research study that the majority of participants do not have effective strategies in place to combat the negative effect of stereotyping (see section 4.3.4.1). Only three of the nine participants responded on this important point. These three participants recognised the importance of avoiding stereotypes which in their classrooms often relate to male and female gender roles.

82

Addressing different languages in the same classroom

It is noteworthy that only one participant addressed the issue of different languages in the same classroom (see section 4.3.4.2). The important role of language proficiency in education cannot be disputed, but none of the other participants had reflected on possible strategies that could be used to address the challenge of learners with different mother tongues in the same classroom. From the one respondent's remarks, it appeared that she has a rather simplistic understanding of how to deal with language diversity. She also cannot provide relevant examples of strategies that can be used to address this problem. All eight other participants did not comment on the language issue.

Addressing teachers' own ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups in the same classroom

The only strategies with regard to teachers' own ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups in the same classroom (see section 4.3.4.3) that were mentioned by the participants are self-training via a study of the different cultural customs of the learners in their classrooms and workshops held by the Department of Education, the purpose of which was to support teachers' attempts to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. Although several participants responded in the discussion of this issue, none of them mentioned other strategies that can empower them with knowledge and skills regarding multicultural education and the creation of an unbiased classroom environment. They did not mention the importance of in-service training or attending national and international conferences. It is clear from their responses that the participants are not aware of their responsibility to acquaint themselves with the purpose and benefits of having in-depth knowledge of diversity in all its multifarious forms.

Addressing learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism)

Although only five of the nine participants actively engaged in the discussion on this matter, it appeared that they all endorse the value of multicultural education and an unbiased classroom environment (see section 4.3.4.4). The five participants that responded indicated that they are using pictures of different race groups in order to transform negative attitudes into better and sympathetic understanding of different races. They are also using dolls of different race groups to engender respect for other cultures. Furthermore, they tell stories and discuss posters that reflect the uniqueness of different cultures. In other words, they emphasised the positive aspects of different cultures in order to engender and enhance respect for different people. Therefore, it is clear from the findings that the participants display valuable insight into the problem of disrespect for cultures that differ from their own.

Addressing teachers' prejudice and discrimination

The reality of teachers' prejudice and discrimination against some learners is actually an embarrassing revelation because teachers are supposed to act as role models for learners. None of the participants was able to identify and explain ways to eliminate prejudice and discrimination that some teachers display (see section 4.3.4.5). It is therefore concluded that all nine participants lack the necessary skills, attitudes and values to address this challenge.

Addressing teaching media in the classroom

The participants were very vague about using teaching media as a strategy to create and manage an unbiased classroom environment. From the participants' responses during the interview, it seemed as if they do not really understand the important role that media can play in establishing and managing an unbiased classroom environment. They merely mentioned using pictures and charts

displayed with pictures of Black, White, Coloured and Indian children. Dolls are also used but no indication or explanation was given with regard to the value thereof. Books of different cultures are also used. The books are in different languages, shapes and colours. The participants could not, however, explain the purpose of using such books.

One of the aims of this research study was to ascertain what current strategies the participating Grade R teachers are employing to deal with the challenge of avoiding bias in a Grade R classroom environment. Flowing from this, the researcher viewed it necessary to recommend additional strategies to help the participants deal effectively with these challenges (see section 4.3.3.6).

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the empirical investigation this study can conclude with the following recommendations to support Grade R teachers in creating and managing unbiased classroom environments, specifically in the Isipingo District, KZN and also in other similar school districts.

5.3.1 Additional strategies for Grade R teachers to create and manage unbiased classroom environments

The additional strategies as recommended by the researcher according to the challenges identified by the participants are the following: (1) the reality of stereotypes; (2) the problem of learners speaking different languages in the same classroom; (3) teachers' own ignorance of the nature of different cultural groups in the same classroom; (4) learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism); (5) teachers' prejudice and discrimination; and (6) teaching media in the classroom.

5.3.1.1 Addressing the reality of stereotypes

People, items and events are placed in conceptually specified groups. Stereotypes are shaped due to the overload of ideas and experiences that we have, and the human brain developed stereotyping as a device which keeps the brain from being cognitively overwhelmed with information. In other words, the brain creates categories (or files) into which large amounts of information are stored. A stereotype consists of a category of rigid and over-generalised ideas. When a racial, cultural, national or social group is stereotypically labelled, such labels are often presented as genetically determined and unalterable (Lemmer et al 2008:24). Therefore, it is often difficult to discourage stereotyping.

Teachers must, however, discourage stereotyping, both in their own ideas of people and in the developing ideas of the learners in their classes. The following strategies that Lemmer et al (2008:23) give as well as the last one given by Lopes (2004:1) can be useful:

- The teacher must ensure that his/her attitude as a Grade R teacher reflects respect for all learners' cultures.
- The teacher must not assume that the learners are able to identify stereotypes and are able to do away with stereotypes.
- The teacher must motivate learners to engage in positive teamwork and mutual problem-solving.
- The teacher must recognise and value any reduction of stereotypes in the classroom environment.
- The teacher must focus on every learner as an individual person when planning the layout of the classroom environment.

5.3.1.2 Addressing different languages in the same classroom

Literature states that about 70 – 90% of classroom messages are conveyed through non-verbal means (Lemmer et al 2008:39). Many of these non-verbal,

behavioural or body-language messages are determined by the cultural background of the receiver and the sender. Aspects such as forms of address, customary behaviour and communication style can hinder effective teaching and learning (Lemmer et al 2008:39-43). Teaching events are communicative events, and therefore, learners whose cultural background and body language differs from that of the teacher might not experience enough positive identification and will almost certainly experience problems with the communication process. These problems impact negatively on the teaching and learning experience.

If the Grade R classroom environment does not address the language issue in all the areas of the classroom layout, successful teaching and learning cannot take place. The following strategies are recommended by Lemmer et al (2008:40-45):

- The teacher must be sensitive to how learners of diverse cultural background observe reality, why they observe reality in a particular way, how they express their perceptions and how these perceptions differ from the teacher's perceptions.

- The teacher must pronounce names and surnames correctly.

- The teacher must study the special meanings attached to non-English names of learners and display them on the birthday chart on the wall. Attach pictures of the meanings of the names next to the names.

- The teacher must ask learners how they prefer to be addressed.

- The teacher must ensure that all instructions in all the areas of the classroom layout are clear, consistent and to the point.

- The teacher must ensure that the learners understand group instructions and/or individual instructions. If necessary, instructions can be repeated many times to groups or to an individual.

- The teacher must ask learners to demonstrate what they have to do in every area of the classroom in order to ensure that they have understood.

5.3.1.3   Addressing teachers' own ignorance of the nature of different cultural
groups in the same classroom

Teachers should support the philosophy of cultural democracy which forms the basis of a classroom climate in which all learners feel confident about their cultural identity and cultural voice. Furthermore, teachers should attend on an on-going basis developmental anti-bias training programmes. These should not be once-off programmmes but a series of follow-up training (Goduka 1998: 51).

Teachers should set themselves the task of learning more about learners' cultures and backgrounds that differ from their own (Lopes 2004:1) and they should study how cultural factors influence the teaching and learning process (Lemmer et al 2008:19). They should adopt a more humble, tentative attitude towards their own judgements (Lopes 2004:1).

5.3.1.4   Addressing learners' lack of respect for teachers and peers (racism)

The teacher must present the customs, lifestyles and traditions of different races in the different areas of the classroom in such a way that it helps the learners to understand the value, meaning and role of customs in their lives and in the lives of other people (Lemmer et al 2008:100). The fantasy area can be especially useful in this regard. Material used in the different classroom areas must be free from terms and images deemed insulting and degrading by other cultural groups (Lemmer et al 2008:100).

The teacher must provide material in the different areas that will offer the learners a wide variety of experiences and thus develop acceptance of, respect for and positive attitudes towards the learners' own cultures and the cultures of other groups (Lemmer et al 2008:100).

5.3.1.5   Addressing teachers' prejudice and discrimination

Teacher must allocate leadership roles, responsibility and duties equitably in the classroom environment. Teachers must also avoid grouping learners on the basis of cultural background, gender or race unless it has a very specific purpose.

5.3.1.6   Addressing teaching media in the classroom

In a document, *Creating a multicultural classroom* the following suggestions are made with regard to teaching media in unbiased classroom environments (cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415963879/resources/Chapter%203.ppt):

- In the art area, the teacher can provide different skin tone coloured markers, craft paper, different skin tone papers, collage materials from different cultures, scraps of imported cloth, rice papers, dry gourds, coconut shells, red clay feathers, raffia, sea shells, dry fish scales and coral rocks.

- In the book area, the teacher can display books on cultural diversity, cultural ethnicity, different lifestyles that are representative of the learners' families, books about the different alphabetic systems and counting books with numbers in different colours and sizes. Journals, magazines and newspapers in different texture, formats and languages are also helpful as well as books made by the learners about themselves and their families and books with story tapes that include ethnic background music.

- In the visual display area, the teacher can display picture postcards and posters from different countries and cultures.

- The area for music and movement is excellent for Grade R learners' participation in folk songs, ethnic music, vocal music and instrumental music from all over the world. Songs with simple words and melodies from other cultures that encourage acceptance of differences and cooperation is an important inclusion in this area. Drums, horns, conch shells, maracas, gourds, tambourines, marimba and wooden flutes are all instruments which will interest Grade R learners.

- The fantasy area has no limitations. The teacher can depict men and women in a variety of work roles and traditional roles. Representations of various family lifestyles and family incomes can be part of this area. The teacher can provide a variety of bags, baskets, foods (real and fake) and eating and cooking utensils. Multiracial dolls, clothing, shoes, hats, scarves, belts, rugs and mats from different cultures are essential items in the fantasy area.

- Puzzles, board games, multi-ethnic, non-sexist puzzles and other home-made activities can be part of the toys and games area. Sets of graduated wooden dolls for sequencing as well as foreign coins can all be kept in this area.

The above recommendations are representative examples of teaching strategies that encourage an unbiased classroom environment. Due to page restraints for a dissertation of limited scope, no further recommendations of teaching strategies can be included. Instead, the researcher will proceed in the following section with recommendations for further research.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following are recommendations for further research based on the findings of the literature study and the empirical investigation.

5.4.1 Formal training programmes for tertiary teacher education

Further research should be conducted regarding the inclusion in teacher training programmes of multicultural education and the creation and management of an unbiased classroom environment. The researcher recommends compulsory multicultural education modules with in-depth and enriched content in all teacher training programmes. Further research in this regard must be conducted.

5.4.2 Pre-service training (PRESET) and in-service training (INSET) for teachers

Investigations into both pre-service (PRESET) and in-service (INSET) teacher education are recommended.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research study and its narrative report were undertaken in order to stimulate discussion among Grade R school teachers who face the challenge of planning, creating and managing an unbiased classroom environment. The research study was done in the hope that it will encourage further discussion around the issues raised by the participants. The findings of this research cannot be generalised and projected onto other Grade R teachers and schools. However, the recommendations are general guidelines that can be implemented by all Grade R teachers. Thus while it must be emphasized that, although the findings of this study are confined to three schools in the Isipingo District, (KZN), the research suggests some important ways in which classroom environments can be rendered unbiased towards all learners in all schools, and in particular Grade R learners.

5.6 CONCLUSION

It became evident from the results of this study that Grade R teachers in the Isipingo District lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of the principles that undergird the planning and creation of an unbiased classroom, and that they therefore cannot address the challenges that they are currently experiencing. It was evident from the numerous challenges indicated by the participants that Grade R teachers need to be effectively trained in the anti-bias skills that are required for the planning of an unbiased Grade R classroom environment. On-going in-service training and attending workshops and conferences are crucial for these teachers.

The findings of the empirical investigation are subjective and possibly pertain only to these specific Grade R teachers. However, it is hoped that the conclusions and recommendations derived from the findings will provide direction to other Grade R teachers and to teacher trainers so that all Grade R teachers can implement effective strategies that will address the challenges identified in this research.

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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO

Tel: 033 341 8610
Fax: 033 341 8612
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

228 Pietermaritz Street
PIETERMARITZBURG

INHLOKOHOVISI	PIETERMARITZBURG	HEAD OFFICE
Imibuzo: Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar	Reference: Inkomba: 0052/2009	Date: Usuku: 11 August 2009

MRS K SOMA
P.O BOX 392
UNISA
0003

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.
2. Educators' programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.
5. Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.
6. A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.
7. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **Indoor anti-bias environments appropriate for young children.**

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

K.Soma
Student No. 0832-028-4
P.O Box 392
UNISA
0003

30 July 2009

The Principal
SCHOOL A

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:
SCHOOL A

Project Title

INDOOR ANTI-BIAS ENVIRONMENTS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUNG
CHILDREN

I am currently pursuing a master's degree at UNISA. My details are as
follows:

1.1.Full Name &Surname	Kooshmilah Soma
1.2.Title	Mrs
1.3.Student Number	0832-028-4
1.4.Proposed field of study	Early Childhood Development
1.5.Institution	UNISA
1.6.Existing Qualification	B.Ed
1.7.Proposed Qualification for Project	M.Ed
1.8.Home Telephone Number	031-4094540
1.9.Cell number	0842518212
1.10.e-Mail	KOOSH.SOMA@GMAIL.COM
1.11.Supervisor	Dr Petro Marais
1.12.Telephone number	012-4294612
1.13.e-Mail	maraip@unisa.ac.za

Anti-bias can be defined as an approach to early childhood education that sets forth values based on the principles and methodology in support of respecting and embracing differences acting against bias and unfairness

The specific aims of the research are:
-to identify the principles of anti-bias indoor environments for young children.
-to identify and explain a developmentally appropriate environment.
-to identify criteria which could be used in planning the optimum environment.
-to identify guidelines teachers could use to create an anti-bias indoor environment for learning through.

The findings from this research study will have implications on teacher training and in-service courses to be offered to qualified teachers to cope in multicultural classrooms.

The theoretical background for the investigation will be based on the facilitation theory (the humanist approach) which will be conducted within a qualitative research paradigm. The study will concentrate on observation of the classroom environment and the experiences dealt with in the curricular lesson. A checklist will be used for the observation.

This study will also utilize focus group interviews. Three foundation phase educators will be interviewed from three schools in the Isipingo area. There will be 9 participants in the focus group. An interview schedule will be used for the focus group.

The teachers who participate in this study will do so on a voluntary basis and they will be selected purposively because they are educators in the foundation phase.

The confidentiality of the participants will be guaranteed and respected. No individual will be forced to participate and all ethical considerations governing research will be strictly adhered to by the researcher and the respondents.

I hereby apply for permission to conduct the research.

I thank you in anticipation of a favourable response.

Yours faithfully

_____   _____

Researcher: K.Soma   Date

K.Soma
Student No. 0832-028-4
P.O Box 392
UNISA
0003

30 July 2009

The Principal
SCHOOL B

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:
SCHOOL B

Project Title

INDOOR ANTI-BIAS ENVIRONMENTS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUNG
CHILDREN

I am currently pursuing a master's degree at UNISA. My details are as
follows:

1.1.Full Name &Surname	Kooshmilah Soma
1.2.Title	Mrs
1.3.Student Number	0832-028-4
1.4.Proposed field of study	Early Childhood Development
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1.6.Existing Qualification	B.Ed
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1.11.Supervisor	Dr Petro Marais
1.12.Telephone number	012-4294612
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I hereby apply for permission to conduct the research.

I thank you in anticipation of a favourable response.

Yours faithfully

_____   _____

Researcher: K.Soma   Date

K.Soma
Student No. 0832-028-4
P.O Box 392
UNISA
0003

30 July 2009

The Principal
SCHOOL C

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:
SCHOOL C

Project Title

INDOOR ANTI-BIAS ENVIRONMENTS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUNG
CHILDREN

I am currently pursuing a master's degree at UNISA.My details are as follows:

1.1.Full Name &Surname	Kooshmilah Soma
1.2.Title	Mrs
1.3.Student Number	0832-028-4
1.4.Proposed field of study	Early Childhood Development
1.5.Institution	UNISA
1.6.Existing Qualification	B.Ed
1.7.Proposed Qualification for Project	M.Ed
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I thank you in anticipation of a favourable response.

Yours faithfully

_____   _____

Researcher: K.Soma   Date

Research topic

PRINCIPLES FOR THE PLANNING OF AN UNBIASED CLASSROOM IN GRADE R.

Interview Schedule

- Please state your qualification and years of service.

- Have you heard of the term unbiased or anti-biased?

- What does the term unbiased or anti-biased mean?

- Have you been trained in anti-biased principles as an educator?

- How have biased attitudes affected you?

- How has this affected your attitude to people of different race, culture, language, gender or ability?

- How can you ensure that your classroom environment is unbiased?

- How can play be used to create an unbiased classroom environment?

- How would you deal with experiences in your curricular lesson to ensure that you are an unbiased educator?

- What challenges do you face in your school regarding being unbiased?

- How do you propose to deal with these?

- What help do you need to become an effective unbiased teacher?

- Is there anything further that you feel is important?

Transcript of the focus group interview

Good afternoon ladies. Welcome to this focus group interview. The purpose of this interview is gather research evidence for the research topic:

PRINCIPLES FOR THE PLANNING OF AN UNBIASED CLASSROOM IN GRADE R.

I'd like to assure you that your identity will be protected. Please state your qualification and years of service. Mam, we'll start with you.

Participant 7: I've been teaching for 15 years and have a degree.

Participant 8: I have been teaching for 20 years and have a degree.

Participant 4: Completed my diploma. Teaching for last 6 years.

Participant 5: I have a diploma and have been teaching for 5 years.

Participant 1: I am still completing my diploma and I'm teaching for 4 years now.

Participant 9: I have a diploma and I've been teaching for 20 years.

Participant 2: I completed an ECD course and have been teaching for 3 years.

Participant 3: I have a degree and have been teaching for 30 years.

Participant 6: I have a post-graduate degree and have been teaching for 25 years.

Researcher: We will now find out how many of you have heard of the term unbiased or anti-bias. Please answer by saying yes or no.

Participant 7: Yes.

Participant 8: Yes.

Participant 4: Yes.

Participant 5: Yes.

Participant 1: Yes.

Participant 9: Yes.

Participant 2: Yes.

Participant 3: Yes.

Participant 6: Yes.

Researcher: We'll now look at the meaning of anti-bias or unbiased. What does the term mean?

Participant 3: …err I think it means fair.

Participant 1: It could also mean treating boys and girls fairly.

Participant 5: I think it refers to how poor or rich children are treated.

Participant 4: I think not to favour anyone.

Participant 6: mmm… It could also mean not to be biased.

Participant 9: Also it could mean to treat all learners equally.

Researcher: We'll now look at anti-bias principles. I'd like to know how many have been trained in anti-bias principles as an educator? Please answer by saying yes or no.

Participant 2: Yes.

Participant 1: No, I haven't.

Participant 6: No.

Participant 4: Yes, I have.

Participant 9: No.

Participant 7: No.

Participant 5: Yes, I have.

Participant 8: No.

Participant 3: No.

Researcher: Okay, my next question is how have biased attitudes affected you as a teacher?

Participant 6: Well at one time I only had Indian learners in my class but not anymore.

Researcher: How do you feel about this mam?

Participant 6: I don't know how to say this but I actually feel very disappointed.

Participant 9: I only have 4 Indian learners in my class.

Researcher: Has this affected you in any way mam?

Participant 9: Definitely. I miss having children of my own culture in my class.

Participant 8: When the learners are in the foundation phase they respect us, but as they go into the Senior Primary they show no respect. Although these are the learners that we taught.

Researcher: Why do you think this happens mam?

Participant 8: I think in their culture they are taught not to respect ladies.

Researcher: By using the word "they" who are you referring to?

Participant 8: The black learners.

Participant 7: Because most of our learners live in shacks they come to school with very poor hygiene. Some come with sores, scabies and runny noses. This puts me off.

Participant 1: They don't respect Indian teachers.

Participant 5: I haven't been trained in anti-bias principles but our biases definitely affect us errr maybe unconsciously- it's the way we were brought.

Participant 4: You know because of the crime especially hijacking I am afraid of black men.

Researcher: My next question is how has this affected your attitude to people of different race, culture, language, gender or ability?

Participant 5: Sorry I didn't get that question, could you please repeat.

Researcher: Most certainly mam. My question is how has biased attitudes affected your attitude to people of different race, culture, language, gender or ability?

Participant 1: We have to cater for children with disabilities.

Researcher: How would cater for children with disabilities.

Participant 1: errr…I'm not sure. I haven't been trained in this.

Participant 5: I have tried to learn about the different cultural customs in my class to help me understand the learners.

Researcher: How have you been able to do this?

Participant 5: I have taught some of it in Life Skills errr I also ask the Black teachers on the staff.

Participant 4: Because of the influx of black learners, the level of education has dropped at our schools.

Researcher: How have you managed to cope with this?

Participant 4: Well, we have to do very simple activities with learners. They cannot cope with difficult tasks.

Researcher: I'll move on to my next question which is how can you ensure that your classroom environment is unbiased?

Participant 6: You can have pictures of different race groups.

Participant 9: I try to use dolls of different race groups.

Participant 1: You can use books with stories of children of all races.

Participant 8: Labels in classes should be written in different languages-depending on the races in your class.

Participant 7: I try to use what I call "kitchen Zulu" in my lessons to help the learners understand.

Researcher: How can play be used to create an unbiased classroom environment?

Participant 4: It will be good if you mix boys and girls when playing.

Participant 1: When playing games, ask Zulu learners about their games.

Participant 5: You can have mixed race groups in games.

Researcher: The following question is how would you deal with experiences in your curricular lesson to ensure that you are an unbiased educator?

Participant 4: In Life Skills if you are doing a lesson on festivals, you can incorporate festivals like Eid, Diwali, Christmas and a Jewish festival although you may not have Jewish learners in your class.

Participant 6: During my lesson I will use Zulu words as well the ones that I know.

Participant 9: Or we could try to ask the learners as well.

Participant 8: I would do a lesson on different cultural clothing.

Researcher: What challenges do you face in your school regarding being unbiased?

Participant 7: The large numbers in classes. I have 47 learners in my class.

Researcher: How has this affected you as an educator?

Participant 7: Well, I am not able to give learners individual attention, especially the ones that have learning problems.

Researcher: What challenges do you face in your school regarding being unbiased?

Participant 1: Language barriers-learners do not know English.

Participant 5: Lack of parental involvement. Most of our learners live with grandparents who are illiterate and although many letters are sent home, they never respond.

Researcher: Mam errr why do the grandparents never respond to your letters?

Participant 5: Well, I think that they are just not interested.

Participant 1: But in our school I find that the grannies are more interested in their grandchildren's education than the parents.

Participant 9: You know the problem in our school mam is all the letters I send in Zulu, I try to send in Zulu but the grannies don't understand.

Researcher: Okay mam, you said that the grannies are very interested in the children's education. Why did you say that?

Participant 1: errr…The grannies pay school fees with their grant and if we send for them, some of them do come.

Researcher: Are there any other comments with regard to the challenges that you face in your school?

Participant 5: No matter how much you can teach these learners about morals and values they never learn. Like today we had an incident. One Black learner told the Indian learner, you only like that music because you are an Indian.

Participant 7: errr…like the other day I went to serve relief in a class. A learner was crying. When I enquired why she was crying, another learner told me that an Indian girl had pinched the child. The learner said that this girl hits all the Black children in the class.

Researcher: So mam are you saying that learners are racist?

Participant 7: Yes, definitely.

Researcher: Why do you think that learners are racist?

Participant 1: Err… I think they are racist because their parents are racist.

Researcher: What other challenges do you face?

Participant 1: Mmm…I'm not sure how to say this. In our school we have some middle class learners and also some very poor learners. I think that all learners should be treated equally.

Participant 6: With the high rate of HIV infections. Learners are exposed to pornography and sexual abuse. We are not trained to deal with these problems.

Researcher: How do you propose to deal with these challenges?

Participant 9: Definitely with a pay raise we can deal with it.

Researcher: Okay mam I've got some good news   I heard the OSD is in the pipeline. Let's get on to some serious stuff. Any more comments as to how you are going to deal with these challenges that you are faced with?

Participant 9: The department can definitely help by reducing the number of learners in classes.

Participant 8: The government needs to improve the socio-economic conditions of the poor.

Researcher: Would you like to elaborate on this point?

Participant 8: The government needs to create more jobs to improve the living conditions of the very poor.

Participant 7: Illiterate grandparents must attend adult literacy classes.

Participant 1: I don't think that we as educators will be able to deal with these challenges- we definitely need support from the Department of Education.

Researcher: What help do you need to become an effective unbiased teacher?

Participant 5: I think workshops should be held.

Researcher: And who do you think should hold these workshops?

Participant 5: The Department of Education.

Participant 1: When parents admit learners to our schools they say that they want them to learn English but sometimes it is hard to communicate with these learners.

Participant 5: Maybe we need to learn Zulu.

Researcher: Mam, I see that you nodding your head in disagreement. Why are you in disagreement?

Participant 1: Because I don't want to learn Zulu. I don't even know my mother tongue. These learners must learn English.

Researcher: What other help do you need to become an effective unbiased teacher?

Participant 4: I think we need support from the Department of Education and management.

Participant 6: Since the term anti-bias is a new concept to me, I would like to be trained in this.

Participant 9: We can attend lay counseling workshops to deal with HIV infections in schools.

Researcher: Have we left anything out? Is there anything important you'd like to add?

Participant 9: Mam in our school we normally took our classes up from grade 1 to 3 but our principal has advised us not to do that anymore. He said if a learner has a teacher that screams a lot, then that learner has to listen to screaming for 3 years.

Researcher: Do you think he is justified in saying this?

Participant 9: Well, his argument does have some merits. Learners need to be exposed to different types of educators.

Researcher: Finally, is there anything further that you feel is important?

Participation 8: I haven't been trained to teach learners of all races. I think the government should provide an in-service course to train us.

Researcher: Ladies we have come to the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your participation.

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE FOLLOW- UP FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Good- day ladies. Welcome to this second interview. I appreciate your input in the previous interview but it is general procedure to engage in another focus group interview to get more information rich data.

Researcher: Mam, in the first interview you stated that unbiased or anti-bias meant fair. Would you please elaborate on this?

Participant 8: I think fair means to treat all race groups of learners in your class equally.

Researcher: Mam, you stated that you felt disappointed that you did not have only Indian learners in your class. Why do you feel disappointed?

Participant 9: I am disappointed because I have not been trained to teach multicultural classes but now I am forced to do just that.

Researcher: The following questions are directed to the three educators that indicated that they received anti-bias training. What kind of training did you have?

Participant 2: I completed an Early Childhood Development course where I obtained a certificate.

Researcher: Did any of your coursework address unbiased classroom environments?

Participant 2: The Facilitating Active Learning course addressed concepts such as anti-bias, gender issues and strategies about multicultural education. Children with special needs were also discussed.

Researcher: How did this course help you in the classroom?

Participant 2: I acquired knowledge and skills from these concepts about unbiased classroom environments.

Participant 4: I completed a National Certificate in Early Childhood Development.

Participant 5: I completed the same course. It was a National Qualifications Framework Level 5.

Participant 4: The course Facilitate an Inclusive Education Environment in ECD dealt with anti-bias, inclusive education and gender issues.

Participant 5: Also how to Manage Diversity in ECD Settings dealt with unbiased classroom environments and strategies about multicultural education.

Researcher: How did these courses help you?

Participant 4: It increased my knowledge and skills about unbiased classroom environments.

Participant 5: I agree with her.

Researcher: How long was the training?

Participant 2: The course is over 1 year full-time study. But I completed it part-time over two and half years.

Participant 4: I completed it part-time over 3 years.

Participant 5: I completed it part-time over 4 years.

Researcher: Who was the training provider?

Participant 2: Training was provided at Coastal College Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Participant 4: The New Beginning Training and Development Organisation provided the training.

Participant 5: This course was funded by the Department of Education.

Researcher: Where did it happen?

Participant 2: I attended lectures on a Saturday at Swinton Road, Mobeni.

Participant 5: We also attended lectures at Swinton Road, Mobeni.

Researcher: What current challenges do you experience in establishing and managing an unbiased classroom environment?

Participant 6: We as educators tend to segregate between boys and girls. In the classroom we allocate certain duties to boys and certain duties to girls only.

Participant 9: I know that I am guilty of this. I tend to send learners on errands who are fluent in English. I think they are more reliable.

Participant 1: Sometimes we discriminate against learners in terms of social backgrounds. Learners who are neat and come from middle class families are given more attention in class.

Participant 9: I think that I don't know enough about the different cultural groups in my class to establish and manage an unbiased classroom environment.

Participant 1: I haven't been trained in anti-bias skills. How will I know what materials to choose to create an unbiased classroom environment?

Researcher: My next question which is what current strategies do you have in place for dealing with the mentioned or identified challenges in the previous question. The responses to this question may be able to help you.

Participant 4: We must choose storybooks where there are no gender biases, where women and men do all kinds of work. Choose books with stories about children of all races. There should be no biases in these books.

Participant 5: Some books should also be in different languages. We must also have books about different shapes, colours and numbers.

Participant 4: The posters in the class should reflect the diverse cultures of South Africa and more especially those of the children in your class. The posters must also represent the different socio-economic groups.

Participant 2: We must also set aside time to discuss the posters in our classes. The displays in our classrooms should include artefacts from all cultural groups. There should also be different types of homes displayed in the class.

Participant 4: We must choose materials that reflect the children's experiences and cultures in our classes. I have made a chart of the different eye colours in my class.

Participant 5: We must also have activities that interest boys and girls. Activities must not be labelled as boy or girl activities. Educators should encourage learners to do all activities. For drawings and paintings, all skin colours should be provided.

Researcher: Is there anything further that you feel is important? We have come to the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your participation.

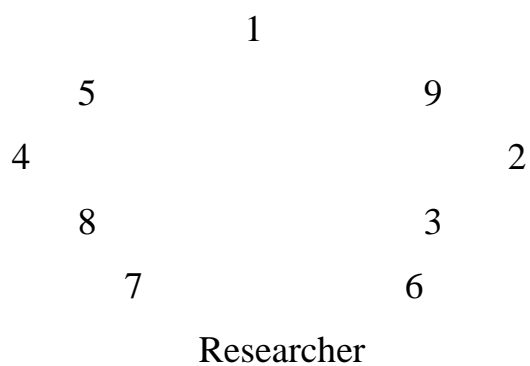Field Notes   Appendix H

Date: 25-11-2009

Time: 13h00

Place: School B

Number of participants: 9

Start: 13h00

End: 14h00

Seating chart

                          1

                5   9

        4   2

                8   3

              7   6

                  Researcher

        Questions   Responses   Observation

        1.Qualifications Positive   Professional

        2.Term   All aware

        3. Meaning   6 responses   Unsure-

                                          meaning

        4.Training   3 trained

        5.Attitudes   Participant 6   Sad- no Indian

                                          learners.

                          133

	Participant 8	Unhappy-disrespect-learners
	Participant 7	No direct eye contact-talk-hygiene-embarrassed.
6. Affected attitude	Participant 1	Unsure-disabilities.
7. Classroom environment	Participants 6,9,8, 7	Vague examples.
10. Challenges	Participant 5	Disappointed-learners morals and values.
	Participant 1	Concern-poor learners.
	Participant 1	Nods head – disagrees-learning Zulu.
11. Dealing-challenges	Participants 8,9, 1,5,4	Department of Education.