TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN MULTICULTURAL DIVERSE CLASSROOMS

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Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Abstract

This study explored teachers’ perspectives and the experiences that shaped their perspectives towards multicultural diverse classrooms, and how their practices reflect their beliefs. As Canadian schools continue to show how learners come with many different experiences, many different ways of seeing the world, different ethnic background, and many different learning needs, the more responsive and sensitive teacher educators become. Through face to face (semi-structure) interviews, I was able to elicit how teachers’ definitions, beliefs and perspectives of multicultural diverse classrooms influenced explicitly and implicitly their instructional strategies and their assessments. All participants emphasized that knowing the students as a group and as individuals behind the classroom walls, is key points. Knowing the student is this way enabled them to serve and facilitate the learning process for a multicultural diverse classrooms. This study affirms that the more teachers became aware, sensitive and thoughtfulness about multiculturalism and diversity, the more they were able to provide and facilitate safer and effective learning settings. The primarily findings show that teachers’ understanding of their students ethnic, race backgrounds and cultural differences helped providing positive, confident and interactive learning environment, and raised cultural knowledge awareness among teachers and their students. Secondly, with diversity comes plurality that promotes and cultivates inclusive environment where all voices are heard, and all students’ needs are accommodated. Thirdly, in order to maintain a dynamic and democratic learning environment, all teachers developed and enhanced their thoughtfulness towards their teaching techniques, interaction, communication and authentic activities.

Key Words: multicultural, diverse, equity, plurality, mindfulness, thoughtfulness, cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

Abada, Hou, Ram (2008) identify that culturally and linguistically diverse students constitute the mainstream school population in an increasing numbers of schools in Canada. Abada et al. (2008) further describe that culturally and linguistically diverse students may have customs, traditions, and values that set them apart from their peers and interfere with their self-esteem and ability to participate in learning experiences. Some students may be fluent in English and some may be English language learners. Therefore, it is fundamental that educators recognize that diversity not only refers to ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity, but neither does it only refer to children with exceptional needs. Diversity encompasses all children, their ethnic language, family structure, learning styles, and personalities. All these factors contribute to the construction of multicultural diverse classrooms. Even a group of so-called typical learners from Caucasian, Indian, Middle East, or Chinese families are diverse in how they learn best. Consequently, these differences are reflected in the multiplicity of learning styles of students. Abada et al. (2008).

Anderson and Stillman (2013) state that Canadian educators are striving to realign educational theory and practice with current conditions and challenges. The challenge for students, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background, is learning to appreciate and function comfortably in more than one cultural context, while the challenge for educators is to design and implement programs which integrate a multicultural perspective into all aspects of the educational process. Anderson and Stillman also note that even in ideal educational settings, one of the biggest challenges teachers can face is learning to effectively and sensitively teach students from different cultures. Acknowledging and accepting differences in backgrounds,
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

cultures, beliefs, and so forth, will foster friendship among adults and students of different
diverse culture.

Purpose of the Study

My desire and curiosity to explore not only how teachers design, structure, and maintain
dynamic multicultural diverse classrooms, but also to gain deep understanding of how teachers
help their students integrate within the educational structure and with their class peers. My
attempt is to discern whether there are any specific universal rules for responding to ethnic,
gender, and cultural diversity in the classroom. Through this inquest, I want to deeply explore
teachers’ personal experiences and beliefs regarding multicultural diverse classrooms. I hope to
learn from experience how to overcome the challenges in such unique and complex
environments to develop recommendations for future practice. Through this study, I would like
to achieve knowledge of teaching strategies, methods, and pedagogies with an aim to shine a
spotlight on current prevailing teaching practices as they relate to diverse students. I want to
accomplish this while lauding the progresses made so far and attempting to explore areas that
may have been unexplored or need further elucidation.

Research Questions

My overarching research question is: What is the connection between teachers’
perspectives towards diverse classrooms and their practice?

The research sub-questions are:

1) In what ways are elementary teachers defining and enacting multicultural diverse
classrooms?

2) What shapes teachers’ perspectives towards multiculturalism and diversity in the
classrooms?
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

3) What strategies do teachers develop and practice to sustain dynamic and equitable multicultural diverse classrooms?

Background of the Researcher

There has been substantial research conducted, as well as literature written, about multicultural diverse classrooms and teachers’ perspectives. The reader may then wonder as to the reasons behind the writer’s interest and desire to investigate an area researched by many renowned social scientists. My interest in conducting such a study is twofold: personal and professional. On a personal level, the difficulties I experienced as a student in Canadian schools in the 1990s stimulated my interest in this area. As an immigrant, I naturally possess a background, practice, and culture that are entirely different from the culture of Canadian students and teachers. These learning experiences made me question the legitimacy of the learning material and tests. The learning material did not incorporate the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. I strongly believe that to effectively teach students, teachers need to modify or incorporate lessons to reflect the cultural diversity of the students in a particular class.

On a professional level, I am interested in this issue because as an educator it is my passionate belief that the schooling of our nation’s youths should be such that all students are given equal opportunities to achieve success academically, emotionally, and socially. Also, this interests me as an educator, as I have an ambition not only to practice my teaching in Canadian schools, but also to broaden my teaching horizon to other countries with multicultural diverse classrooms. Therefore, it is vital for me to gain better understanding not only of the instructional strategies, but also how to shape and reform my perspectives and approaches to educating in
multicultural diverse classrooms. More precisely, I need to equip myself with all the knowledge, methods, and techniques to further enrich my students’ learning experiences and skills.

Certainly, teaching in such a multifaceted environment is challenging, but if we know ourselves and our diverse students better, we will be able to provide an equitable and effective learning environment. I strongly believe that diversity and complexity in the classroom present us with a chance to enhance the quality of education for all our students and provide them with opportunities to develop into productive citizens. I believe our challenge is not only to provide students with effective educational programs, but also to examine teachers’ biases and attitudes toward students from multicultural diverse backgrounds.

Overview

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research sub questions, the interview questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature that examines the definition of diversity and teachers’ beliefs, perspectives in multicultural classrooms. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure used in this study including information about the sample participants and data collection instruments and the limitations of the study. Chapter 4 identifies the participants in the study and describes the data as it addresses the research question. Chapter 5 includes limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study. References and a list of appendices follow subsequently.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The articles used in this review address and identify the various definitions of a multicultural diverse classroom, and examine teachers’ perspectives and beliefs in such environments, as well as the social justice in diverse classrooms. Basically, this review will first look at definitions of the terms: diversity, multicultural diverse classrooms, and teachers’ perspectives. Secondly, it will discuss diversity and social justice in such multilayered environments. Finally, it will outline the best support for diversity and social justice in multicultural diverse classrooms.

Definitions of Terms

In the following sections, I will elucidate definitions of diversity, multicultural diverse classrooms, and teachers’ perspectives in relation to the extant literature.

What is Diversity in the Classroom?

O’Donnell (2008) defines diversity as visible and non-visible. According to O’Donnell, racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds are visible diversity and different learning styles, different levels of motivation, and different opinions about the world are nonvisible diversity. In Hofsted’s (2001) work, diversity refers to all of the ways that people are different, and this includes individual groups and cultural differences. According to Hofsted, the dimensions of diversity include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status.

Devito, Shimoni and Clark (2012) claim that the term diversity has grown in use where it appears in the popular media, professional magazines, scholarly literature, and trade books. Devito et al. (2012) give detailed descriptions of dimensions of diversity such as: social class, sexual orientation, religion, personality, learning style, communication style, and family
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

background. Devito et al. argue that some of the diversity dimensions are either ignored or perceived to be more important than others. According to Devito et al., people may perceive some dimensions as more important than race or gender. Devito et al. also concur with Hofsted’s (2001) argument that while diversity itself is not a value-laden term, the way that people react to diversity is driven by values, attitudes, beliefs, and so on. In other words, diversity is a word that means different things to different people, especially in education and workplaces, the word often means any point of human difference. Devito et al. (2012) further elaborate that our ability to recognize, understand, and adapt to these differences indicates how we interpret the meaning of diversity.

Another definition describes diversity as a variety of learning styles. Hall and Mosely (2005), identify that there are a few main types of learning styles that students may possess. These main styles of learning are visual, audio, and kinesthetic. Hall and Mosely (2005) address visual learners as those who learn best through what they see in front of them (i.e., through diagrams, displays, or handouts). Second, auditory learners are those who learn best through hearing what they learn through lectures, discussions, discussion, and debate. Third, kinesthetic learners learn best through hands-on activities, and through physically interacting with the world around them. So a diverse classroom is one that responds to the needs of various groups within the class and to the learning style differences among students.

**What is a Multicultural Diverse Classroom?**

During my search for a precise definition of a multicultural diverse classroom, I realized that to choose a specific definition that represents or provides an exact meaning of diverse classrooms was not an easy endeavour. Amongst the various definitions, however, one implies that a multicultural diverse classroom is an environment in which both the students and the teacher are
from different ethnic backgrounds accepting of all races, cultures, and religions. Not only students from different, cultures, faiths, backgrounds, but also students with different learning styles, abilities and intelligences (Allen, Paasche, Langford, Nolan 2002).

Another definition considers a multicultural diverse classroom as an inclusive classroom that welcomes students from various abilities and backgrounds. Inclusive classrooms consider that all students are full members of the school community and are entitled to the opportunities and responsibilities available to other students in the school. An inclusive classroom also means that students with exceptionalities attend preschools, daycares, educational, and recreational programs with their peers; therefore, inclusion is about belonging, being valued, and having choices (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hutchinson 2007).

Inclusive classrooms can also be defined and interpreted as a general education classroom space that physically, emotionally, and socially includes students with different abilities, intellects, and backgrounds. Further, it can be seen as a classroom where the curriculum is adapted to allow students with exceptionalities to participate in the general education (Artile & Dyson 2005). In line with Allen et al. (2002), King, Hunter, and Karten (2009) describe multicultural diverse classrooms as ones that accept and value human diversity and provide the necessary support, so that all children and their families can successfully participate in the program, schools, and educational institutions of their choice. Artiles and Kozleski (2007) and Artiles and Dyson (2005) also explain that through beliefs, values, experience, and outcomes, one can recognize and identify inclusion.

Simply put, all the definitions of multicultural diverse classrooms portray one aspect of these classrooms. A classroom that recognizes that all students are unique in their own way and that their differences could consist of their athletic ability, cultural background, personality, religious
beliefs, reading level, etc. Davis (1993) also reports that some students seem naturally
enthusiastic about learning, and some need or expect their teachers to inspire, challenge, and
stimulate them. He adds that whatever level of motivation the students bring to the classroom,
they are transformed either for the better or worse depending on the type of teacher-student
interactions and the kind of instruction provided.

Diversity and Teachers’ Beliefs and Perspectives

Spradly and McCurdly (1984) believe that teachers’ beliefs are shaped by their
experiences and backgrounds and that these affect their teaching practices. The authors explain
that,

We tend to think that the norm we follow represents the “natural” way human beings do
things. Those who behave otherwise are judged morally wrong. This viewpoint is
ethnocentric which means that people think their own culture represents the best, or at
least the most appropriate way for human being to live. (p. 23)

Reeve (2006) believes that teachers originated their beliefs about teaching and diversity
from their personal experiences as students. To provide examples, some teachers’ beliefs might
be driven from other personal experiences such as family traditions and values, or social
encounters and community participation, literature, teachers’ education programs and practices.
Reeve adds that teachers' beliefs about learning are influenced by their epistemological beliefs.
Teachers’ epistemological beliefs impact their understandings of what it means to teach and how
teaching is best assembled (Reeve 2006).

According to Pratt (2005), perspectives govern what we do as teachers, what we think,
and whether we see actions as worthy or justified. He further explains that teaching is guided by
individual perspectives on teaching which are defined by actions, intentions, and beliefs.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

regarding knowledge and learning. When teachers believe that their focus should be on what is required for students’ success and needs, rather than that they cannot counteract the influences of family/society, they move away from identifying risk to assessing and building on capabilities. Many research studies support Pratt’s notion about teacher beliefs or attitudes, and that effective instruction in classrooms are related to classroom teachers’ beliefs about the nature of different abilities and disabilities (Ginsberg, 2005; Jordan, 2007; Middleton, 2002; Wiggins, Follo & Eberly 2007).

Jordan (2007) confirms that teachers’ beliefs have a major influence on shaping what they perceive and notice about their students, which in turns has a profound influence on how they teach. For example, when teachers believe that their focus should be on learners’ self and dignity, they instill in their students a sense of self-confidence. Similarly, when they believe that their focus should be on the learners’ intellectual development, they help their students to think critically to solve problems. Indeed, they go beyond the obvious and probe the content for its deeper meaning or significance. Jordan (2007) adds that teachers’ beliefs about their roles and responsibilities in diverse classrooms influence both the quantity and the quality of their instructional interactions with students.

Ginsberg (2005) affirms that the diversity of learners in a classroom suggests that a meaningful examination of teachers’ beliefs and perspectives is fundamental. The distinction between different beliefs and assumption of students’ abilities and disabilities underpins differences in the attributions that teachers and parents make about children’s learning. In agreement with Ginsberg, Pratt (2005) also explains that teachers' beliefs are not limited to their personal ones, but also exist on global level. These beliefs also serve as overarching frameworks for understanding and engaging with the world. Pratt clarifies that some teachers use their
Teacher’s Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

beliefs and perspectives as guiding principles through which new experiences can be understood. Therefore, teacher’s beliefs are a part of teachers’ identities.

Wiggins et al. (2007), Ginsberg (2005), and Pratt (2005) stress the importance of continuous examination of teacher educators’ beliefs and assumptions. Failing to examine beliefs can have negative consequences as they guide practice and priorities. Wiggins et al. (2007), Ginsberg (2005), and Pratt (2005) strongly believe that perspective determines what is ignored, influences decision-making, and shapes what types of interactions are valued. Simply, teachers’ beliefs guide their decision-making behavior and interactions with students. Teachers’ beliefs also shape their planning and curricular decisions, and result in determining what should be taught and what path instruction should follow.

Alternatively, teachers who believe the self can be a valid source of knowing are likely to structure their classrooms in ways that emphasize students’ contribution to the learning process. Furthermore, these teachers tend to believe that teachers and students know and learn together and that learning happens best through dialogue and shared interaction (Ginsberg, 2005; Jordan, 2007; Wiggins et al., 2007)

Within this context, Hutchinson (2010), Stacey (2007), and Jordan (2007) affirm that teachers with intervention beliefs, not only see themselves as responsible for removing obstacles and barriers to students access to learning, but also interact more and at deeper levels of cognitive engagement. On the other hand, teachers with pathognomonic beliefs believe that students with learning difficulties are the responsibility of specialists outside their classrooms. (Hutchinson, 2010; Stacey, 2007). Such teachers interact little with students with disabilities. All researchers conclude that students with and without disabilities in the classroom of interventionist teachers have better opportunities to learn and improve. (Hutchinson, 2010;
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Stacey, 2007; Jordan, 2007). Moreover, teachers’ attributions of how students learn and their skills in fostering learning can have either positive or negative connections to their practices. These attributions that teachers make about their students are reflective of his or her implicit theories about learning (Hutchinson, 2010).

According to Jordan (2003), Stacey (2007), Hutchinson (2010) attributions reflect the teachers’ sense of personal efficacy, the sense that he or she is able to have an impact on even the most difficult students. Teaching practices and effort in promoting students’ achievement are linked to teachers’ attribution and sense of efficacy. Simply put, teachers with a strong sense that they are responsible for how students progress, promote extensive learning opportunities and have a strong sense of students’ success. Conversely, teachers who doubt their efficacy and who believe that learning is the students’ responsibility, tend to make attributions about students lack of ability and effort.

Abiddin, Jelas, and Saleha (2011) examine different aspect of teachers’ attitudes and perspectives. In their study, the authors point out that teachers’ attitudes toward school diversity are influenced by the educational context where the school environment is, not at the inclusive environment level. Abiddin et al. refer this shortcoming to the lack of awareness among teachers on elements of diversity in school, or due to insufficient exposure provided by school administration or teacher education programs. Abiddin et al. (2011) and Davis (2006) suggest that it is important for the school to promote awareness of school diversity among teachers and students. Subsequently, this will not only enhance awareness to diverse issues, but also embrace the elements of cultural diversity in terms of different living styles, family economic status, and ethnicity. Additionally, the study also demonstrates how differences in teachers’ personal
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

theories about ability and disability are connected to how responsible they see themselves working with students who are under-achieving or gifted.

In her study, Identifying and responding to needs in education, Noddings (2005) proves that teachers’ definitions of diversity affect the ways they understand and employ the terms, as well as how they approach sociocultural difference in their classrooms. Therefore, the limited opinion of what constitutes diversity affects teachers’ senses of efficacy, responsibility, and advocacy as individuals and as teachers.

**Diversity and Social Justice**

“The right of each students to be free from harassment, violence, or malice in speech or action is unequivocal and schools carry the clear obligation to provide a positive school environment for all students and staff” (Ontario Conferences of Catholic Bishop, 2004, p.10). These conferences not only raised the awareness and understanding of the diversity that exists within our schools including differences such as race, ethnicity, sex, age, physical ability, culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background, mental ability, but also provided a framework and action plan that supported the achievement of social justice for all students. In particular, emphasis was placed on ensuring that students’ backgrounds, abilities, and differences do not prevent them from achieving the full benefits of participation in the schools. Also the conferences addressed injustice faced by those who historically have been and frequently continue to be marginalized, ignored, or subjected to discrimination or other forms of oppression.

Davis (2006) considers a diverse classroom as a forum that permits students of all ethnic and cultural groups to fully develop their talents and individual potential, and that enable learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic, and
pluralistic society. Cruz strongly believes school administrators and teachers should strive to ensure that differences among learners do not impede their participation in school, their achievement of prescribed learning outcomes, or their capacity to become contributing members of schools and society. Gay (2010, 2013) and Grant and Gibson (2011) talk about how the classroom teacher whose day-to-day work most directly affects the learning of students must implement instructional and assessment activities that promote students’ healthy respect and support for diversity. Grant and Gibson (2011) suggest that teachers must actively teach social diversity, social justice, and value the development of understanding and respect for all students.

Gay (2010, 2013) and Grant and Gibson (2011) recommend modeling understanding and respect for all students in practice by using inclusive examples, language, and resources in their classroom. Gay (2013) states that teacher educators must recognize the importance of a positive sense of personal identity in allowing students to achieve success with their learning. Furthermore, Gay upholds that teachers not only need to focus on student aptitude and performance with respect to the subject area(s) they teach; they also need to systematically and deliberately focus on finding ways to make their classrooms welcoming of diversity. Grant and Gibson (2011) encourage teachers to continuously test and examine their assumptions about students’ emotional comfort levels and nonacademic needs such as feelings and emotions. Both authors are strong advocates of supporting the development of students’ varied and personal identities through explicit references to diversity, and by elevating the social comfort levels of students who might have reason to feel marginalized or disadvantaged due to their race, ethnicity, sex, age, ability, culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or socioeconomic background.
How to Best Support Diversity

In considering how best to provide support for diversity and social justice, Martell (2013) recommends that teachers go beyond the assessment of their students’ aptitudes, skills, and knowledge with respect to the subjects being taught. According to Martell, teachers must strive to use inclusive language examples as much as possible, because some differences are less visible and it is impossible to know every student’s situation. Grant and Gibson (2011), and Gay (2013) believe that there is a strong connection between democratic processes and the achievement of social justice. Martell (2013) synthesizes that engaging students in democratic process helps further students’ sense of responsibility and appreciation for the participation of all community members in decision-making. Simultaneously, teachers need to apply professional judgment in deciding when having students “assume control” of learning processes will best further their learning. Martell (2013) also stresses that teachers must recognize and value any incremental increases in students’ awareness and understanding of democracy and social justice.

Johnson and Johnson (2009) link effective teaching in multicultural diverse classrooms to the social and cultural contexts within which students live. According to Johnson and Johnson, teachers should take into account attentiveness, communication, and engagement with the community. By doing so, teachers become familiar with community demographics, issues, and concerns and are aware of the main community attitudes, expectations, and social assumptions. Garcia, Hoelscher, and Farmer (2005), also encourage teachers’ facilitators to raise questions, instill awareness of alternatives, and help students make connections. Through carefully thoughtful questions, teachers will be able to expand students’ knowledge of situations and events. Encouraging reflection on events including self-reflection and focusing critical thinking on situations including social justice are the heart of equity and equality in the classroom.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

As the inquiry into the connection between teachers’ perspectives towards multicultural diverse classrooms and their practices ensued, O’Donnell (2012) confirms that to appreciate and accommodate the similarities and differences between student cultures requires specific skills and reflective practices. Teachers of culturally diverse students have more complex tasks in their classroom than ever before. Teachers, educators, practitioners have to acknowledge both individual and cultural differences enthusiastically, and identify these differences in a positive manner. No doubt, dealing with integrating diverse cultures in the classroom needs a conceptual framework in order to make coherent decisions as a teacher. Furthermore, the necessity to create a bias-free environment mandates critical thinking and reflection on a school’s cultures, program and curricula, and instructional strategies.

Wighting (2005) and O’Donnell (2012) agree that teachers’ reflection on their behaviour, perspective, and attitudes towards cultural diverse classrooms is a key point. The need to understand the family uniqueness that encompasses ethnic, racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences, as well as the unique structure and tradition of individual families, is crucial for the students and school success. This is especially important as our society becomes more diverse and families encompass unique blends of backgrounds. This type of a bias-free perspective recognizes and respects the different needs and values systems of the students and families. A bias-free perspective must be translated into practice by developing programs that naturally integrate differences into everyday activities, and class or course material.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the various stages of the method of the study. This includes description of the procedures, selection of the participants, the instrument of data collection, data analysis, the ethical review procedure, and finally, the limitations of the study.

**Procedures**

The purpose of the research study is to explore the connection between teachers’ perspectives and their educational strategies in a multicultural diverse classroom. My overarching research question is: What is the connection between teachers’ perspectives towards multicultural diverse classrooms and their instructional strategies and practices? I grounded this study in qualitative methods using a positioned-subject approach (Conrad, Haworth, & Millar, 2001). In a positioned-subject approach, the researcher assumes that the participants under study actively create meaning from interpreting their work. The positioned-subject approach of this inquiry was selected because it allowed me to take in the varied perspectives of a particular group of teachers and interpret their experiences through the lens of their particular teaching positions and equity goals. In this inquiry, the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of four public elementary teachers’ perspectives, practices, and skills to sustain dynamic, democratic, inclusive multicultural diverse classrooms.

**Participant Selection**

For this study, I sought participants who did not fit the traditional understanding of multiculturalism and diversity in the classroom, but rather participants who deeply enacted equity and equality through their practices. I wanted participants who had a range of experiences, including teaching in single culture environments and multiple culture environments. My intention was to validate and authenticate diversity based on teachers’ illustrations with
narratives describing their personal-professional experiences and practices. Due to the time limitations and academic restrictions, this research was completed through non-probability “convenience sampling” (2007). A convenience sampling is made up of people who are easy to reach. According to Creswell (2008), non-probability can lead to the under-representation or over-representation of particular groups within the sample. This undermines the researcher’s ability to make generalizations from the sample to the population under study.

I also used snowball sampling (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998; Maxwell, 2005), as two teachers were referred by one of the participants (my associate teacher) to possible teachers to approach for this study. I started this sampling with one teacher who was my associate teacher and whose work I was familiar with from my practicum experience. My associate teacher recommended other teachers who might meet the criteria, as well as Board teachers who might know additional teachers who could contribute to the study. This purposefully snowballed into a potential sampling of three teachers. All four teachers worked in suburb schools, mainly, within the Board within the greater Toronto area. All four participants are currently working at a JK - 8 public French Immersion school.

All four teachers met the criteria for participation. Three of the teachers that I interviewed were grade 7/8, who also worked a couple of years at grade 5/6 classes. The fourth participant is currently a special needs educator, who had worked at different grades for the past seven years. Two identified as white, one identified as black, and one identified as white and gay. Two were females and two were males. Their teaching experiences ranged from 8 to 25 years. The teachers’ ages ranged from early-thirties to mid-fifties. This group is diverse in a number of ways. First racially, as one teacher is black, and secondly based on their socio-economic
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

backgrounds, as two participants were brought up in wealthy families and two are from middle class families.

All participants have extensive teaching experiences in both single culture classrooms, such as with a primarily white Caucasian student population, as well as classrooms where language, ethnicities, religions, and abilities were highly diverse. I used pseudonyms for each participant, to confirm the potential sensitivity of this study, and to ensure that no harm will come to the teachers’ as a result of their participation in the study. I did not identify the participants’ school to further protect their confidentiality. Table 1.1 below highlights the key characteristics of the four participants.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>6,7, 7/8</td>
<td>Language Art, Social studies, Math</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jamal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4,5,6/8</td>
<td>Math &amp; librarian, social studies, language Art</td>
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<td>Rihanna</td>
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<td>5,6,7,8</td>
<td>Language Arts, Math &amp; social studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janna</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6,7, 7/8</td>
<td>Language Arts, Science, social studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Janna

Janna started teaching after she obtained her university degree in education. She is a white female in her late forties. Janna’s entire teaching career of 25 years has all been in the same board of education. Her first teaching experience was limited to a single culture school (Caucasian students), where she was exposed to class diversity. This exposure raised her conscious awareness, and made her question her assumptions about her students’ socio-economic
status. After a few years, she started a new phase in her profession by teaching in more diverse classrooms. Teaching in the diverse classrooms motivated Janna to learn about intercultural and multicultural education. Janna is also an elementary teacher educator who educates and trains novice teachers about how to interact and communicate in multicultural diverse classrooms.

**Rihanna**

Rihanna has a bachelor degree in education and special needs education. She is in her thirties and has worked for more than 10 years in the same Board within the greater Toronto region. Rihanna’s personal schooling experiences as a black girl have had a great influence on her philosophy and approach to education in multicultural diverse classrooms. She was brought up in a middle class Jamaican family with her siblings. In her school years, Rihanna was not recognized and acknowledged as a black individual, therefore, she felt invisible. During her university education program, Rihanna always wondered openly and publicly how an authentically educated person should look. She also had envisioned how educated people should be characterized, and what knowledge and experiences they should possess to value and teach in schools that are designed for a functioning democracy.

**North**

North is a white male who was raised in a well-educated family. He started his teaching career at a very young age, in his early 20s, and he displays a strong commitment to diversity and equality. He is an experienced elementary school teacher in a school district in the greater Toronto region and he is a strong advocate for equity and equality teaching. Currently, North teaches grade 7/8 Math, Geometry, History and Geography, in addition to Language Arts. He has been an elementary school teacher for approximately 14 years. His insights and experiences in multicultural diverse classrooms highlighted major issues borne from diversity and complexity
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

in the classrooms. Similar to Janna, North described the development and validation of an instrument that can be used to assess students’ perceptions of their learning environment as a means of monitoring and guiding changes towards a fair, just, and cooperative learning environment.

Jamal

Jamal is currently a faculty advisor at Toronto University, OISE. He has been working as an elementary teacher for the past 10 years. Jamal taught all grades at the elementary level ranging from grade 1 to 8. He mentioned that he worked predominantly with intermediate students in grade 7 and as a librarian. Jamal is the only participant who possesses a Master’s degree in teaching and conducts conferences and workshops that promote anti-discrimination in teaching and learning environments. Jamal is a white, gay man whose dedication to diversity in terms of sexual orientation within the confines of his school is evident and his range of expertise on this area of research is immense.

Instruments of Data Collection

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interviewer followed the general interview protocol, but freely explored ideas as they were raised by the participants. The interviews lasted from 30-60 minutes at the participants’ school. One of the interviews was conducted in OISE’s library. To ensure that the interviewee felt comfortable, to eliminate distraction, and to ensure that all parties involved with the interview were completely engaged, I did not rely heavily on writing notes during the interview. I followed the interview protocol by asking the predetermined list of questions (see Appendix A); however the order changed during the interview, and some questions and prompts had been added and/or removed when necessary.
Participant ideas and perspectives were explored in a manner consistent with inductive data analysis (Creswell 2002), and the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher reviewed all four transcripts to note general patterns and emergent themes. The most effective means of describing similarities among participants of comparable persuasion, while simultaneously highlighting the diversity of perspectives was the development of profiles. The research was conducted by collecting the following data: valuable and relevant research from the current literature and individuals’ face-to-face interviews with experienced school educators. In gathering my data, I sought in-depth description of teachers’ perspectives towards multiculturalism and diversity. In the one-on-one interviews I asked questions and recorded answers from one participant in the study at a time. I believe that interviews have disadvantages because not all people are equally articulate, clear, and perceptive, and my presence might affect how the interviewee responds, or they might provide only information which is filtered through the views of the interviewer (Creswell, 2013).

Nevertheless, I paid attention to the conversation with my participants and used icebreakers to encourage them to talk. I recorded the information from interviews by making handwritten notes and audiotaping. I also used emerging questions to permit the participants to generate responses. In other words, my questions reformed and emerged during data collection. Saturation and small size sample are two equal and viable approaches in qualitative research. Charmaz (2006) clarifies that the researcher stops collecting data when the categories or themes are saturated. However, I found that collecting data in such manner, and not relying on questionnaires or instruments developed by another has been a great privilege. Creswell (2008) states that, “You seek to learn from the participants in the study and develop forms, called protocols, for recording data as the study proceeds” (p. 56).
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Shortly after collecting my data, I transcribed my audio recordings, which formed a database composed of words. I transcribed my interviews within 24 hours to keep the momentum and nuances of the discussion. I reviewed all the data to make sense of it, and then I hand-coded my data. Hand-coding was to some extent a laborious and time-consuming process with transcripts from interviews with four participants. According to Creswell (2008), coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. I used the inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes. I selected specific data to use and disregarded data that did not provide me with evidence for my themes.

Once my data was coded, I organized my data into themes that cut across all the data sources. In other words, I read the transcripts many times to make sense out of text data. I segmented the data and took apart the data, as well as put it back together. Although I was in the process of interviewing others, I was analyzing the first interview that I had collected earlier. I was also simultaneously engaged in writing memos that will be included as part of my findings. Creswell (2014) says, “The qualitative research is interpretive; the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants. This introduces a strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process” (p. 187).

I believe that thoroughly reading all the data multiple times provided me with a deep sense of the information and opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning. For example, what general ideas are my participants sharing, and what is their tone. Basically, my process involved identifying text segments, placing a bracket around them, and assigning a code word or phrase that related to a single code.
Ethical Review Procedure

Since the process of collecting data requires a sufficient level of trust based on a high level of participant disclosure of their personal teaching experiences, a number of ethical issues were considered. First, consent letters were sent electronically and also hard copies were provided to each participant at the start of the interview. Each participant kept a copy of the consent letter. The consent letters conveyed that the teachers are participating in the study and the purpose of the study. Therefore, prior to engaging in the interview process, the research participants were given these letters to inform consent (see Appendix A). These letters were reviewed and signed by all four participants, which testify their willingness to participate and contribute to the research study. The letters of consent outlined each participant’s right to withdraw from the study at any point in time, and their right to refrain from answering particular questions if they choose to do so. Secondly, all participants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the study, and the information that they provide would be kept confidential. Thirdly, the participants were given the opportunity to pose questions regarding the nature and process of the study prior to commencing the interviews.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter outlines my findings in relation to the data collected during four in-depth interviews that were conducted with experienced teaching professionals. Four semi-structured interviews solicited the views of four participants on the topic of multicultural diverse classrooms and instructional strategies. The questions were designed to elicit perspectives throughout the interviews and reinforced the critical connection between teachers’ perspectives and their practices. The teacher participants provided analytical and in-depth responses to the study’s sub-questions: 1) In what ways are elementary teachers defining and enacting multicultural diverse classroom? 2) What shapes teachers’ perspectives towards diversity? And, 3) What strategies do teachers develop to sustain dynamic and interactive multicultural diverse classrooms?

I grouped the findings into three major themes that captured the key elements of the teachers’ definitions, conceptualization, and understandings of multicultural diverse classrooms and how these elements influenced their practices. These three interconnected themes include: cultivating a positive learning environment, promoting and developing inclusive perspectives among students, and thoughtful practices in multicultural classrooms. These themes also highlight the importance of multiple teaching approaches, raising culture awareness, and fostering and facilitating positive learning experiences for all students regardless of their differences and abilities. The three major themes also overlapped and interconnected with each other.

**Theme 1: Cultivating a Positive Learning Environment**

- Acceptance of cultural and individual diversity in the classroom
- Inclusiveness
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

- Cultural knowledge and awareness

**Theme 2: Promoting and Developing an Inclusive Perspective among Students**

- All voices are included
- Facilitating discussions and dialogues
- Diversity requires plurality

**Theme 3: Teachers’ Thoughtful Practices in Multicultural Diverse Classrooms**

- Classrooms that promote thinking and questioning
- Mindset and positive views
- Interactive approach and students’ engagement

**Cultivating a Positive Learning Environment**

There are a number of factors that require exploration as part of a positive learning environment. In what follows, these will be explored in turn.

**Acceptance of Cultural and Individual Diversity**

The first theme that emerged from the data relates to cultivating a positive learning environment through acceptance of cultural and individual diversity, inclusiveness, and cultural knowledge and awareness. All four participants agree that dependent on how teachers define multicultural diverse classroom, their classrooms become a reflection of their beliefs. Three participants associated diversity with race, ethnicity, culture, age, disability, religion, gender, language, and socioeconomic class. According to Janna, Rihanna, and North, the definition of diversity is multilayered, interconnected, and nuanced. As Janna says,

A diverse classroom is acceptance, acknowledgment and acceptance that differences exist, in physical appearances, clothes, and learning styles. Acceptance of upbringing and different ways of interacting with others. Because culture is not only about
Teacher Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

traditions, language and food, it is more than that. It is a religion, belief system, different ways of thinking and behaving. [It is about] unconditional acceptance of a student with his/her possibilities and abilities, where he/she functions and where he/she needs to be respected. That means that she/he needs the opportunity to co-decide, to choose what important is for him/her. Therefore, in such a classroom, I use inclusive teaching strategies, such as using different approaches that address the needs of students with a variety of backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities.

This sentiment is mirrored in the literature when scholars address dimensions of diversity. According to Devito et al. (2011), the dimensions of diversity include social class, sexual orientation, religion, personality, learning style, communication style, and family background. Devito et al. further state that our ability to recognize, understand, and adapt to these differences indicates how we interpret the meaning of diversity. Similar to Janna, North holds a strong belief that a multicultural diverse classroom is a classroom that welcomes each student, and respects and affirms that their cultural and linguistic backgrounds will be treated as equally valid and important. As North says,

Diversity is to teach who ever lives in your neighbourhood, and that our public school is open to serve every student shows up at our classroom doors.......I was told a long time ago that, you are here to teach everyone who comes to your class regardless of his ability, language, cultural background and religion.

According to North, diversity is inclusion and acceptance of each individual, regardless of their gender, religion, colour, culture or language. His views of diversity revolve around fair treatment, appreciating diversity, and applying the utmost understanding of the need to meeting various learning styles, communication patterns, and cultural differences. He affirms that
teachers must take into account the multiplicity and mixture of human experiences and must familiarize themselves with their students’ cultures. He emphasizes the importance of “knowing your students not only as students but as persons beyond the classrooms walls.”

Regarding this aspect, Janna states that multicultural diverse classrooms are inspiring spaces that include experiences which allow students to explore events, matters, concepts, issues and themes from multiple perspectives. Janna adds that to help students effectively learn, this requires teachers to develop their knowledge about the sociocultural background of their students. She says, “I need to know more about my students and their experiences, their thinking and views, to dig deeper to knowing how they shape their views about themselves and their world.” She emphasizes that the content of the learning material should be relevant to the lives of students.

In agreement with Janna, Rihanna further explains that a diverse classroom is a classroom that embraces multicultural diversity by the thoughtful choice of the learning material, and, specifically, the content should reflect in some way the everyday aspects of lived experience for the students. Rihanna says in this regard: “I like to select pictures, create analogies or relate stories to connect new information to the experience of the students.”

Inclusiveness

Jamal’s definition of a multicultural diverse classroom reveals multiple layers of diversity. He believes that a diverse classroom is more than just an ethnic, racial, cultural, social, and linguistic diversity, but also an inclusive classroom that encompasses gender, sexual orientation, and transgender issues. These sexual differences among the student population are too compelling to be ignored or dismissed. He says,
A diverse classroom is a classroom that includes gender, sexual orientation, and male and female transgender, gays and lesbians in addition to different cultural groups. Looking at those factors, all contribute to diverse classrooms. Classrooms that incorporate ethnic, racial background, gender and sexual orientation and socioeconomic class.

According to Jamal, this classroom must incorporate all varieties of diversity to be proactive in connecting with and learning about students, while, at the same time, utilizing a variety of teaching strategies, activities, and assignments that will accommodate the needs of students with diverse learning styles, abilities, backgrounds, and experiences. He comments, “I always strive to have a strong rapport that creates an exciting learning environment for the students to feel valued and therefore more willing to be intellectually challenged.”

During our discussion, Jamal mentions the word “inclusion” and “inclusive” while referring to multicultural diverse classroom as an inclusive one. According to Jamal, inclusiveness is, “more than including every one, it is how to look at different themes and use a variety of materials to provide diverse perspectives in the curriculum to engage and involve every single student.” Parallel to Kozleski, Artiles, Flet, and Engelbrecht, (2009), Jamal believes that creating an inclusive classrooms environment will save students from feeling marginalized or excluded. Kozleski et al. describe inclusive classrooms as an inclusive learning environment that ensures and welcomes students, and enables them to access, participate and engage in the full range of educational opportunities made available within the learning environment.

Rihanna’s definition echoes Jamal’s as she sees a multicultural diverse classroom as an inclusive classroom, not only where the curriculum is adapted to allow students with special needs, and English language learners (ELL), and gifted students to participate in all aspects of the curriculum, but also where all students are treated as competent. She says,
Teacher’s Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

A diverse multicultural classroom where a variety of students including students with exceptionalities and ELL in a classroom, and there is cultural representation in it, such artifacts and teaching material that represent different religions, cultures, and backgrounds. There is a range of students so each comes to learn from the other and learn about others.

Rihanna adds that teachers must have an in-depth knowledge, not only of the subject matter, but also of their students.

In line with Jamal, Rihanna also believes that inclusive teaching and inclusive perspectives mean more relevant lessons and classroom activities, which result in more engaged students and enhanced learning. She notes, “Students will feel more comfortable expressing their feelings in class.” North and Janna also share similar views and clarify that a multicultural diverse classroom also is an inclusive classroom in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express her/his views and concerns. Furthermore, she says that, “Inclusive classrooms [are ones] in which teacher and students work together to create and sustain a safe environment and respectful interactions.”

Cultural Knowledge and Awareness

Jenna stresses the need to help students understand their own cultures to free them from cultural boundaries. She explains that the teacher must first help students examine their own cultural backgrounds. She claims that, “Some students are very knowledgeable about their ethnic and cultural heritage, while others fail to see how behaviors, attitudes and beliefs reflect their own cultures.” In her opinion, to enhance students learning about their cultures, teachers should select materials that can help students to learn how to cope with their own cultural identity confusion by reading about characters facing similar issues. She says, “By selecting literary
works for the classroom that reflect the perspectives, experiences and values of all ethnic and cultural groups, teachers will be able to better understand their own culture and their students.” Janna believes that students from different cultures have unique strengths and perspectives from which the classroom can benefit. She remarks that, “When the classroom has wide range of ideas, customs, and wisdom to solve problems, this enrich class learning community.” Johnson and Johnson (2009) also link effective teaching in multicultural diverse classroom to the social and cultural contexts within which students live. According to these authors, teachers should take into account attentiveness, communication, and engagement with the community.

In order to develop multicultural awareness, both Janna and North emphasize that the classroom should be a forum that permits students of all ethnic and cultural groups to fully develop cultural awareness and social interaction skills. In this respect, Janna says,

It is important to view our students and to encourage students to acknowledge that each one of them is unique individuals, and to realize that their experiences, beliefs and language effects the way they interact with others, most importantly, the differences that exist within one culture, and not to assume that there is a common culture is shared by all individuals of racial, linguistic or religious group.

Janna and North also believe that teachers should become students themselves by reexamining their beliefs, questioning their assumptions and dissecting subject matter from multiples lenses and perspectives. North says, “I always ask myself what are the social skills that I want my students to possess, and how can I model it for them.” Similar to North and Janna, when Jamal was asked about his role as a teacher in a multicultural diverse classroom, he claims that a diverse classroom means that teachers are positioned to provide classroom-based experiences
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

wherein students learn about diversity and are given opportunities to interact and engage with peers in meaningful and authentic ways.

In this conjecture, Rihanna notes that, “When all students are acknowledged as unique individuals, and that they have different cultural backgrounds, and that their voices are heard, this is cultural awareness.” Rihanna welcomes and advocates the use of multicultural literature to extend students’ knowledge about different cultures and parallel cultures by exposing students to differences and similarities between their own cultures and others. Rihanna uses literacy, especially storytelling, to contribute to interethnic understanding. In her opinion, it is beneficial to use multicultural literature and related discussions to permit students to think and become actively engaged in the text. Consequently, students will benefit from discovering what connections and contrasts emerge when controversies are brought out in the open and discussed. She says,

I like to try to open students’ eyes, I like to expose them to different culture, just having kids to talk about different culture, their family’s traditions, backgrounds, where they came from, just because I see myself. I was in a school with a diverse body of students and I was not recognized. I take it upon myself to make sure that all children recognize each other. At school at that time no one knew anything about my background. I promote that with the kids I have now. This shift, the way I teach, I think it influenced my way of teaching. I know how it feels to be different, my teacher didn’t focus on that, I won’t say that my teacher treated me badly, but they didn’t pay attention to that. They didn’t pay attention to the other students’ comments about me.

Rihanna affirms that texts or stories that challenge the status quo provoke continuous dialogue that does not force a consensus. Stories about people from different countries or
Teacher’s Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

backgrounds help students to understand and appreciate physical and cultural differences. Rihanna adds that stories become the shared body of experience. This will allow students to respond from the perspectives of their individual cultural backgrounds. She says, “Teachers should provoke thinking questions to enhance students’ connections to stories.”

In regard to raising cultural awareness, Jamal explains how to develop cognitive empathy, that is, the attempt to understand others’ perspectives to certain gender and sexual orientation issues. Gurin, Nagda, and Zuniga (2013) recommend developing cross-cultural competence among all students. Echoing, Gurin et al., Jamal also confirms that the examination of diversity issues help students and teachers to develop diversity awareness and sensitivity. He further says, “Infusing diversity issues carries some risk, but it is important to encourage students to speak their minds and make their voices heard.” Jamal believes that students will stretch their thinking and reflect on their own values and behaviour.

**Promoting and Developing Inclusive Perspectives among Students**

The second theme was promoting and developing inclusive perspectives among students by including all voices, facilitating debates and discussions of controversial issues, and the use of multiple teaching approaches as a mandatory practice in diverse classrooms.

**All Voices Included**

According to Janna, North, Rihanna, and Jamal, valuing all voices is more than engaging their students in interesting and authentic activities, it is how to lead students to learn about various cultures, ways of speaking, and attitudes towards schooling in diversity. The participants believe that embracing diversity and cultivating respect results in a community of learners who are enthusiastic in supporting one another, and that helps to set the foundation for quality learning in a diverse environment. Janna says,
I always encourage attentive listening in class, I want to hear my students’ inner voice without being judgmental. That’s why I never hold strong opinion against a student who erred. I listen carefully and attentively to what they say. I go beyond a single story.

Janna also recalls one of her classroom experiences and how she provided fair opportunities for all voices to be heard when Muslims and Sikh students argued about their religious beliefs and values. She recounts the story,

Once, Muslims and Sikh students were arguing about religions. Each party believes that their religion supersedes the other. In this situation, I asked the students to explain how they came to this conclusion, and how this will make them better than others. Both parties were tensed and they all were mad about the other views. I listened to each group very closely and attentively, and then asked them how these religious differences affect their learning as individuals and a community. Just by allowing them to talk freely and openly, without me being judgmental, I found that hearing their voices was an experience for them as well as for me… I learned a lot from their discussions.

Based on their teaching experiences, all teachers agree upon the fact that when students are confronted with diversity issues, they engage in some measure of reflection, adjusting and changing their conception of self and their understanding of their own identity. Janna stresses that such activities should take place early in the school year, preferably within the first few class sessions. She also indicates that most students go through a developmental process as they try to make meaning and sense of the issues, as well as their own identities and experience. Janna also states that emotional load intensified with the dialogue on culture include race, racism, or antiracism. She strongly believes that one of the effective strategies to enhance identity awareness is to redirect dialogue to reduce tension and stress. She says,
Now I had 10 different cultures in the classroom where you may have strong negative opinion from other cultures. Maybe these are not their perspectives, rather their family and the adults from their community. So my role is to do a lot of learning to be able to see my students differently. I look at my class from a lens of religion, culture, language, colour, sexuality.

In her opinion, teachers should address privilege and oppression through the writing and reading to meet the needs of her students considering the sociocultural context and demographic aspects. She further explains that enhancing these discussions is accomplished through critical choice from diverse literature that accurately reflects a group’s culture, language, history, and values without perpetuating stereotypes. According to Jenna, literacy becomes an important means to live in harmony. She also states that the need for a diverse literature, which often deals with issues of prejudice, discrimination, and human dignity, is crucial. Texts rich in cultural details with authentic dialogue, and that present cultural issues in-depth where readers can think and talk about them are needed.

North and Rihanna claim that an inclusive curriculum that includes all voices of students in the classroom, their families, and communities, encourages critical thinking and multiple views on the same matters. North says, “I encourage my students to think about the material, and the media to provoke deeper thinking about what voices were heard or silent. Bishop (2007) and Derman-Spark and Ramsey (2011) encourage teachers to use the educational material and media to enhance critical thinking and inclusiveness through consideration of inclusive of diverse voices and perspectives.
Facilitating Discussions and Dialogues

In discussing the role of the teacher in a diverse classroom, Jamal confirms that he sees his role as a facilitator of dialogue and discussion among his students. “My role is not only to teach new material, but also, to facilitate dialogues and discussion.” According to Jamal, the basic assumption for growth, change, courage for risk-taking, and overcoming obstacles is based on respect while discussing critical events. Jamal affirms that respect is the value of student and it can be shown in different ways, such as “greeting”, “attentive listening”, “address”, “assessment”. According to him, assisting students to learn the protocols and etiquette of discussion, debating, and dialoging is his major responsibility in the classroom. Within this context, Rihanna adds that sufficient interaction through dialogues, discussions, and debates leads to better understanding the students as persons, and helps the students to understand the others intuitively and spontaneously. She considers herself a teacher who guides, redirects, and engages students. She says, “Students need the time to discuss and share their discussions and thoughts.” Janna also elaborates that her role as a teacher is to be a mentor, guide, and facilitator of discussions and dialogues about religion, politics, traditions, and culture to maintain justice and equity in the classroom. She says that, “It is okay to challenge students, shake, expose and critique as far as there is mutual respect and attentive listening.”

In this regards also, Jamal stresses the importance of being a good and strong facilitator to help students understand the situations and build relationships and cooperate with each other. In his opinion, a weak facilitator might do more damage to underrepresented students and lose control of directing the discussion towards the right way. He says, “Each discussion or dialogue activity should improve interaction in the classroom.” According to him, dialogues, and negotiations enable progressive changes of students’ rigid thoughts, ideas and attitudes. He says,
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Authentic dialogue between students in the classroom is the key point of including everyone. Especially, students with disadvantage, their rights should be equally recognized and protected from both teacher and peers. Therefore, I strive to create equal possibilities and access to all social roles and positions in my classroom.

As for Jenna, as a basic principle of democracy in Janna’s class, she encourages input and supports all students to be involved in classroom’s discussions, decision-making, and the giving and receiving of feedback. She demonstrates her appreciation of cultural diversity which goes hand-in-hand with a just and equitable class by paying attention to the kind of food they like to eat, understanding and accommodating the students who refuse to participate in a dancing, or camping activities based on their religious beliefs. She adds that when students' cultures are understood and appreciated by teachers, the students do better in school. She says in this regard, “When students feel more accepted, they feel part of the school community, and they work harder to achieve their goals.” “As a science teacher, developing an understanding of students' lives also enables the teacher to increase the relevance of lessons and make examples more meaningful.” Janna also believes that her students bring with them from their homes and communities “ample knowledge” that provided her with the opportunities to help the students value outside-of-school knowledge concerning the natural world. She says, “The more I recognize the human diversity of our world, the more I appreciate the diversity of the students with whom I work.”

Diversity Requires Plurality

Janna explains that even when students have similar experiences, culture impacts their perceptions, leading them to interpret similar events in differing ways. Both North and Janna agree that as a classroom embraces diverse multicultural students, each student is welcomed and
accepted as a unique and special individual. This acceptance is demonstrated through teachers’ choice of materials, resources, and assessments. A wider variety of approaches to teaching and learning, types and sources of knowledge and performance assessments are used routinely. Janna and North highlight that diverse instructional techniques should be always used, implemented, and continually modified to suit diverse classrooms. Janna says, “Learners in the classroom should always see themselves within the classroom’s material and topics. Simply finding alternative methods to accommodate and meet each student’s needs.”

Abundant research examining the impact of multicultural diversity in our classrooms has firmly established that students from different cultural and racial backgrounds bring different life experiences, identifications, and opinions with them to the schools. (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Desmond & Emirbayer, 2010; James 2001). Students from diverse backgrounds have deviating viewpoints on a variety of issues, including religions, traditions, beliefs, morals, ethics, discrimination, and the power of discrimination in society.

According to both Janna and North, teachers using multiple perspectives and multiple methodologies in teaching about and for diversity are inseparable and highly recommended. North says, “Students need to develop multiple skills, such as social, cultural, interpersonal, and academic to be able to engage in a healthy way in a diverse classroom.” He continues, “These skills include fostering a sense of receptivity to learning about others and their worldviews, experiences and perspectives.” Jamal also talks about illuminating salient features of classroom for and about diversity for students. Jamal and Janna confirm that embracing positive and strong perspectives toward the need for diversity to be explicitly, internationally, and centrally present in all aspects of the schools’ life and teachers’ daily practices.
In their practices, Jamal and Rihanna do not perceive diversity as theoretical and unfeasible for the day-to-day realities, both note “diversity is reality itself”. They believe that the powerful presence of ethnic, racial, cultural, social, and linguistic diversity should be mirrored in the distribution of educational resources and opportunities. In this respect, Rihanna says, “As teachers, we must pursue ways of teaching that value and honour the humanity of each and every student, I mean honoring them as social, cultural, and historical being.” Jamal states that it is important to recognize our own learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and assumptions to be able to develop more inclusive teaching styles. He remarks that teachers need to be ready to have examples that reflect different cultures, experiences, sexual orientation, and gender to include all students and use different teaching methods such as PowerPoint presentations, small groups, discussions, and collaborative learning to meet a variety of learning needs. North talks about creating inclusive culture among the students taking into account the needs of all students of the learning community in the classroom. The goal is to create an inclusive spirit that draws on students’ voices, to be aware of underrepresented students are empowered with a sense of self and self-sufficiency, and to help them to rise to their potential within the classroom and the school. As North says, “If I model diversity, respect, students will follow, most importantly you have to be real, genuine, you can’t fake it…you have to live what you believe, I am always interested in my students’ perspectives and different opinions.”

**Thoughtful Practices in a Multicultural Diverse Classroom**

In what follows, I will explore the many dimensions of thoughtful practices and how they contribute to creating an equity-based multicultural diverse classroom. The third theme that emerged from this study was mindfulness practices and how to create and promote positive mindsets and views, interactive approach and how to increase students’ engagement.
Classrooms that Promote Positive Mindsets

When Janna was asked how she deals or introduces important issues such as politics, social justice, economics, or personal matters and beliefs, she commented that this kind of discussion opens the door for inviting the students to be more capable and powerful actors and choice-makers as they forge their own pathways into a wider world. She says,

Yes, many times. I have a student asked me if I am Christian, and if I was baptized, if I believe in God…… once I taught with a gay male partner and the students kept asking me how I felt about it……you have to be careful not to say your position or your opinion, but facilitate the discussion.

Jamal provides more insights about these kinds of questions, in particular the gender identity questions that seek information about the sexual orientation of a teacher. Jamal believes that talking about gender identity involves seeing students as whole human beings with hearts and minds, bodies and spirits that must somehow must be taken into account. “We must help students to find their way out of the classroom’s door.” He adds that we must be serious in our efforts to teach students the various literacies that will allow them to become competent and powerful. Jamal states,

I believe that students are curious, and they want to hear the answers from the teacher. I know that some students do not agree with my sexual orientation, but they are free to ask, to question and to choose their position. As a matter of fact, by asking questions, they improve their thinking skills and help the student to think deeply to formulate their question. Learning to ask questions in my opinion is a good thing but to find the way to live within and beyond the answers we receive, is the greatest thing.
Jamal on the other hand admits that it is hard to be neutral in responding to personal questions about his sexual identity. He further explains that in paying sufficient attention to the ethnic background of knowledge and attitudes of the students, teachers must create and facilitate authentic discussions without posing his own views. He emphasizes that a teacher’s personal views or opinions about controversial issues should be discussed wisely and not emotionally, lest that cause resentment. He says, “I try to eliminate negative feelings by creating a space for discussion of problems and attitudes inside the groups of students……without taking sides or impose my own views.” Jamal and Jenna hold pertinent opinions about this issue. According to both teachers, to better understand diversity is accomplished through drawing students’ attentions to the existence of diversity in the extent of their individuality. Both Jamal and Janna recommend a monologue interpretation and controlled and regulated discussion that is non-critical and accepting of students’ attitudes. In addition, they believe that providing literature that offers controversial ideas, opinions and inviting students to discuss and express their viewpoints. By doing so, both teachers believe that building a diverse classroom environment in order to provide equal opportunities to express and describe development and essence of opinions, experience values and attitudes for all member of the group.

Similar to Janna and Jamal, North expresses that he likes to think of his classroom as a place of possibility, site of hope and resistance, and participatory place where students are powered by their curiosities and imaginations. He shares that,

Students come to us, they want to learn, they are curious to know. I personally believe that giving the students a project and they decide how they want to go about it. I established this culture… occasionally, I remind them about the rules and how to respects others opinions, then they have the choice how to accomplish it. They already know
what are expected of them and then that direct them to achieve the learning goals. They choose the strategy that suits their project. I modify the assessment to help them demonstrate their knowledge. It comes down to what the students’ needs and how can I help to make them successful.

Similar to North, Rihanna also says,

I like to open my student’s eyes to different cultures, I like to expose them to different cultures, why they do what they do …..to talk about what it feels and looks to be different…When the students have extra or free time, I like to transform my classroom into lively forums of open multicultural exchange.

Rihanna selects materials that help students not only understand another culture’s point of view, but also see their own culture from an outsider’s perspectives. Janna and Jamal encourage their colleagues to use literacy work from different genres and cultures in order to prepare students to live in their increasingly diverse society, and to challenge students to become engaged with and reflect on the material they read. According to Rihanna, this method will help students to develop multicultural sensitivity and enable them to participate actively in their classroom and school community. Janna comments that, “They will be liberated from the restrictions of narrow thinking about others.”

North believes that holding great expectations for all students, regardless of their abilities, motivates students to work harder. North elaborates on that by saying, “When I have a positive attitude towards them and when I raise the bar, students will have positive attitudes about their learning capacity.” According to North, when teachers focus on growth and change, students will feel more competent and will be more engaged in challenging learning opportunities. North says that, “Students live out their expectations so they accept more of themselves.” In parallel to
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

North, Janna says, “Students who have low expectations of themselves, they usually underperform.” She adds that, “Teachers should aim to be an effective engaging teacher, supportive, responsive, and caring, to help students build a higher self-esteem.”

In relation to her responsibility to challenge her students, Rihanna says, “I do not have any specific expectation, but I always believe that my job is to help all students to be successful.” She goes on to say,

I don’t have different expectations of different students because I believe that all students if given the right instructions, and help is offered when necessary they all do well. I believe in respect and accept them as they are is a key point.

In response to his expectation of his students, Jamal comments that teacher support is essential for all students, especially, low socioeconomic students and ESL to believe in their capacity to learn and grow. Teachers’ positive mindsets can help compensate for students’ negative mindsets. He confirms that with teacher support, students will believe in themselves and in their capacity to reach their goals and thus increase their own learning success. In his opinion, it is so important to create collaborative and cooperative environments where students see the classroom as preparation to achieve highest level of academic success and prove that they are as good as their counterparts. Expressing confidence in learning outcomes indicates that teachers believe in their students. For example, Jamal always refers to the learning outcomes as a certainty. Instead of saying ‘if you finish’, he says ‘when you complete’ assuming his students will succeed.

When discussing Janna’s expectations for her students, she describes her educational process and how it impacts her students. She says,
I believe that all of them will succeed in their own ways, I celebrate their success. I post their work that they choose on the wall. I talk about their work and keep samples of their work in a folder as reference or a resource. Each student chooses what to include and what not to include. I practice tribe agreements and always address the girl, as Ms. and the boy as Sir or gentleman.

She further explains that her expectations about her students and what they can do have a powerful effect on students’ performance. According to Janna, if the teacher believes that students are to succeed in a global community, teachers require the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable them to promote learning for all students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, special needs, or language differences. Janna claims that teachers’ attitudes, values, and beliefs might hinder or free students to be all that they can be or inhibit their growth. In line with Wiggins et al. (2007) and O’Donnell (2012), both of whom affirm that teachers’ reflection on their behaviour, perspectives, attitudes towards cultural diverse classrooms, leads to effective teaching, Janna says, “I always reflect and question myself if I am meeting each students diverse needs, and am I providing each with the conditions that enable them to develop their tendency fully and satisfactorily, according to their needs and abilities.”

Furthermore, Janna believes that since each student differs in terms of his/her needs abilities, skills, it requires a more personal approach to each one of them. She always strives to learn in-depth about her students’ cultural differences, beyond what is published about the cultures. In her opinion, to acquire knowledge from a single resource about diversity and multiculturalism leads to extremely simplified, stereotypical images of any cultural background. She affirms that this creates frustration and insufficient identification, or a reality that contradicts the presented cultural characteristics and the student’s self-determined personality and
individuality. Her Muslim students do not like the simple information about their religion, race, or traditions that are presented by academics from publications written by persons who are not members of their culture. She says, “For that reason, I encourage and promote a ‘Speak out’ technique.” She encourages her multicultural students to self-assert and facilitate self-assertion. She assures that each student has the right to speak his/her mind as far as not accusing or attacking others or using demeaning language.

The “Speak out” technique helped Janna to learn more about her students. “I say teach me more and tell me more about you and your culture, and how could I help to learn.” This knowledge that includes ‘family diversity’ too, is to a greater extent what helps Janna to assess the social needs and the educational environment needs, taking into account the sociocultural context, demographic, and individual particularities and competence which leads to professional success. “Tell me about you” illustrates the information Janna wants to know about the students and their families. This approach enables an adequate inclusive approach “towards the family with diverse needs”. Janna concludes, “We can search for appropriate ways to approach diversity and enrich ourselves by discovering new information.”

**Interactive Approach and Students’ Engagement**

North talks about an interactive approach which focuses on developing habits and manners for social coexistence. According to North, achieving inclusive coexistence depends on actions directed not only at students with disabilities, but also to the non-disabled students. For example, the teaching of mutual respect, solving conflicts through factual unemotional discussion, judging others not according to their physical appearances, or mental abilities, but according to common criteria applied to all students, individuals, and humans. These are criteria of merits, manner of behavior, and features of character that are not hereditary. In parallel with
other teachers, North believes that teachers should focus on strengthening key competencies for learning, social and personal skills including communicative skills.

Also, Jamal, Janna, and North agree that sharing a bit of oneself every day is an effective way to build strong relationships. Sharing a brief vignette about your family, your dreams, problems, and passions helps in establishing and building relationships. Janna and North elaborate that shared stories of their adventures with their students have inspired students to have great expectations for themselves. By the end of the school year, their students’ views about their future changes significantly from what they were at the beginning of the year. Echoing Vacarr (2001), Jamal, Janna and North agree that the practice of mindfulness enhances and enlarges teachers’ capacity for empathy. It fosters a sense of open curiosity toward each emerging moment, and it strengthens teachers’ ability to sustain a nonjudgmental stance both toward themselves and in relation to the full range of their students' experiences. Vacarr (2001) affirms that teachers should open themselves to criticism and conversation, and engage in sincere self-reflection.

Jamal talks about the proactive techniques when he was asked about his expectations towards his multicultural diverse students, as shifting and customizing activities to stimulate fuller engagement and participation. According to him, all activities require a touch of customization, fine tuning and automation. He says,

Since students have different learning styles and abilities, I don’t have the same high expectation for everyone….my perspectives, attitudes and expectation are bond with presenting what is out there in the world to my students.” Jamal considers himself as an attitude builder.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

I strive to affirm my students’ ability to learn, choice, effort and that I raises students’ expectations about their potential to go to college or university. It is up to him as a teacher to shift an activity or strategy’s application to adapt to the need of his students. Any activity could be turned to a complex one by changing the rules to adapt to different needs ………an effective differentiation is the most effective strategies in a diverse classroom.

Jamal also believes that a teacher should be mindful of the students they are teaching in terms of how to engage them and what to expect from them. He considers that engagement is about both strategy and attitude. Making decisions to engage every single student in the classroom is the most challenging task. He says, “I use small engaging activities that keep the class moving, such as ‘ask students to stand and stretch’, or simply ‘to identify something that was learned by writing a few sentences on a sticky note’.” Jamal elaborates on this point because, according to him, a critical step in creating an engaging classroom is to build relationships and respect. He says,

Remember that your students care much about how much you care about them and respect their opinions, not how much you know. For example, when I present an opinion, I always make sure to present the counterpart one. I strive to examine topics from all angles and at the same time accepting opposing ones than my mine. Although some of my students opinions are immature and naive, but these are their own opinions and its fine by me.

Janna believes in breaking down activities, embracing clarity such as using few words, giving clear and simple directions saying what you want from students not what you want, don’t help students to become fully engaged and have positive attitudes towards their school work.
According to Jensen (2013), the clarity of teachers’ works and actions is strongly linked to students’ engagement. She emphasizes word choices because they correlate positively with student comprehension of material and influences what they learn from the teacher. In their study, Garcia et al. (2005) explore students’ persistence correlated with the clarity of instruction they received. The authors concluded that instructional clarity help students to accomplish tasks in hands and raise their self-esteem.

When Janna responded to the question if she had preferred strategies or techniques to engage students in a multicultural diverse classroom, Janna recalled a situation that provoked a deeper understanding of her students’ socioeconomic status, which in turn created a different mindset when planning the lesson. From her interaction with her students and their family, she believes that it is very helpful for teachers to understand the deep effects of poverty and to reinforce their efforts to help every student succeed. According to her, classism exists in every class even if the students are living in high income cities. Some students are coming from poor or a middle-income homes, and we need to accept the fact that there are relevant differences among our students.

Overall, these teachers provided compelling data about their experiences in multicultural diverse classrooms leading to just and positive learning experiences for their students. Through the analysis of their experiences, it can be understood that they went to great lengths to enact positive, proactive, and deeply engaging learning environments. It is also clear that in their efforts to create more inclusive, equitable and just multicultural diverse classrooms, they were thoughtful practitioners, who continuously reflected upon their methods, approaches, and beliefs. To continue fostering interactive, diverse perspectives, critical thinking, and questioning culture in their multicultural diverse classrooms, these teachers shared specific strategies and techniques
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

that they developed to sustain welcoming, inclusive learning and growing environments in their diverse classrooms.

These experienced public school teachers described specific ways they enacted to promote, foster, and cultivate constructive learning environments. They also described in detail the strategies, methods, and ways of thinking and teaching. They were clear about their expectations for their diverse student populations, and their thoughtful practices aided them in continuing their equitable multicultural diverse classrooms. They took steps in professional and personal self-reflection to keep their classrooms intact. In doing so, they demonstrated significant accomplishments in creating more inclusive and practical multicultural diverse classrooms.
The central emphasis of this research study has been to explore the connection between teachers’ perspectives towards multicultural diverse classrooms and their instructional strategies. The research questions for this study are: 1. In what ways are elementary teachers defining and enacting multicultural diverse classrooms? 2. What shapes teachers’ perspectives towards multiculturalism and diversity in the classroom? And, 3. What strategies do teachers develop and practice to sustain dynamic and equitable multicultural diverse classrooms? A closer examination of the research questions suggests there is a robust connection between teachers’ perspectives towards diversity and their practices. Furthermore, the teachers’ understanding of the needs, perceptions, ethnic, and cultural diversity of their students, as well as the optimum learning environment for all students, influenced teachers’ methodologies and teaching approaches in their multicultural diverse classrooms. The teacher participants elaborated on how they practically embraced diversity by increasing students’ engagement, providing meaningful learning inclusive environment, and listening consciously to their students’ voices. Subsequently, they were able to help all students to make real world connections to make the learning more meaningful. The teachers used proactive approach to communicate and facilitate the learning process for their students and teach how to think critically. Indeed, the teachers went beyond their own classroom doors with an eye toward how what the students’ learning fits into their educational experience. I personally share this sentiment and perspective as well.

In reviewing the literature, I found that my findings echo the work of numerous scholars. According to Corse, Sanato, and Roof (2002), Ladson-Billings (2003), and Abada (2008), teachers are observing increased differences in race, ethnicity, culture, linguistic, socioeconomic status and students with special needs in their classrooms, which challenge teachers to be more
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

responsive to the diverse needs of their students. Gray (2002), Anderson and Stillman (2013), and Davis (2006) encourage teachers to implement culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogical strategies to enable them to facilitate an active learning environment for their diverse students’ population. Gray (2002), Cole (2009), and Derman-Sparks (2011) stress that to grow professionally, teachers must modify, adapt, and reconstruct their self-image as teachers. Heine (2004), Pratt (2005), and Van Hook (2002), on the other hand, stress the importance of a teacher’s examination of their beliefs towards diverse and inclusive classrooms. All authors, Gray (2002), Cole (2009), and Derman-Sparks (2011) claim that teacher practices are influenced by their beliefs and attitudes and that their students are influenced by their teacher practices. Cole et al. (2000) and Milner (2003) encourage teachers to develop self-awareness of culture, bias, and discriminatory practices, as well as examine the effect of their beliefs and expectations on their students. Wiggins et al. (2007), Ginsberg (2005), and Pratt (2005) strongly believe that perspective determines what is ignored, influences decision-making, and shapes what types of interactions are valued. Simply, teachers’ beliefs guide their decision-making behaviour and interactions with students. According to Wiggins et al. (2007), teachers' beliefs also shape their planning and curricular decisions, and results in determining what should be taught and what path instruction should follow.

This study supports the hypothesis that teachers’ views, perceptions and understandings of their multicultural diverse classrooms, have shaped their pedagogies, teaching methodologies and practices. Their practices demonstrate appreciation for the individuality of each student by creating an open classroom environment that values the experiences and perspectives of their students from different cultures and backgrounds.
Teacher Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Implications for the Researcher as Teacher

This study has given me an opportunity to deeply reflect on my own pedagogy, philosophy of education, and practices. I concluded that the more aware I became of cognizant of cultural diversity and differences, the more responsive and sensitive I am. The development of this skill enables me to serve and facilitate the learning process for all students in multicultural diverse classrooms. Certainly, viewing diversity and multiculturalism in this fashion will provide me with insights into my classroom, my teaching practices, and my growth as an educator.

Indeed, my findings provided many valuable insights into the area of my research. The teacher participants shed light on ideas and strategies regarding: a) how to teach effectively in a multicultural diverse classroom, and b) how to maintain dynamic, interactive, and democratic classrooms. Their insights and experiences enriched my study, as well as my personal and professional knowledge about best practices in such unique and complex classrooms. Precisely, the teachers’ reflective responses to my research questions revealed the rationale behind their techniques, communications styles, interaction methods, and instructional strategies in their multicultural diverse classrooms. I learned to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds, I need to continuously examine myself to identify my own biases and ethnocentrism, and that I should develop behaviours to rise above them. Moreover, an important pedagogy for dealing effectively with diversity in classrooms is using multiple and varied instructional techniques to achieve high level learning outcomes for diverse students. Modeling respect and acceptance for diversity was the major focus for all participants through adjusting their teaching styles to their culturally diverse students and tailoring instructions to accommodate all learning styles.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

It is worth mentioning that what surprised me in the process of my research study was not the number of strategies and techniques that were discussed regarding teaching in a multicultural diverse classroom, but the amount of discussion about teachers’ self-examination of how they reacted to and adjusted their teaching practices. Another interesting element in this study is how teachers use cultural differences to create instructional and social moves that not only acknowledge and respect individual cultural and background differences, but also build on these differences as assets to create inclusive classrooms where all students are engaged in meaningful learning. All participants emphasize the importance of developing cultural sensitivity among students by modeling, facilitating dialogues and self-reflection.

Suggestions for Teachers

First, this research project has several implications for the teachers and teacher educators. Learning from four experienced teachers who support and embrace diversity and facilitate a just and authentic learning environment for all students, provides us with a practical advice as teachers who aspire to create a space for interactive, equitable, positive and culturally responsive learning environment, where the curriculum is rooted in students’ diverse needs and interests. Second, to understand, live, and practice this aspiration, we must always be critical thinkers, thoughtful practitioners, and attentive listeners. Furthermore, we must not only value full inclusion, but also develop diversity competency to facilitate skills to leverage differences to benefit all students.

Implications/Recommendations

As a result of my study, I have developed some advice for the educational community to consider. My recommendations include the following three main points.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

1. In pre-service education, the need for preparation programs that enhance cultural competency by increasing teachers’ knowledge related to integrating diversity into course work, field experience programs, and to increase the capacity of pre-service teachers to work effectively with multicultural diverse classrooms. Such programs must offer more effective practice in diverse classrooms, to increase pre-service teachers’ knowledge in depth to support their understanding of both theory and research-based strategies reading culture, language, race, social class, special needs, and other dimensions of diversity.

2. Practicing teachers should continuously practice thoughtfulness in all aspects of their program, to sustain a nonjudgmental stance both toward themselves and in relation to the full range of their students' experiences. Kohut (1984) considers thinking capacity and attentive listening in the classroom are vitals to creating an environment that invites taking the risk of sharing many different perspectives. In our multicultural diverse classrooms, it is essential that we learn to listen, to be vulnerable, and to willingly enter the anticipated confrontations that emerge. Subsequently, it is significant that teachers engage in sincere self-reflection.

3. School boards and administrators should help teachers promote awareness and understanding of diversity, and support the achievement of social justice. All schools should strive to build a school culture that is inclusive and respectful of all students. In addition, school systems should provide teachers with the adequate incentives and supports to acquire and apply the necessary competence to make multicultural diverse classrooms successful.

Limitations and Further Study

Due the narrow scope of the research project, the primary limitation of this study is the small sample size of participants interviewed and the restricted time frame of the study. The number of literature resources, as well as sample size of four participants, were both limited. In addition, all
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

participants were gathered through convenience sampling and worked in the same school. These limitations hinder the reliability and do not allow the findings to be generalized to all elementary teachers and their practices. My personal biases in the interpretation of the data also added to the limitation of this study. Since all findings are subjected to the researcher’s own knowledge, perceptions, and assumptions of the data collected and assumptions regarding the topic at large, the study becomes more reflective of the researcher ideas or notions rather than of the actual data, which presents issues with validity.

Whereas this initial study shed light on the connection between teachers’ perspectives towards diversity in a multicultural classrooms and their practices, future research is needed in a number of additional areas in working towards more just and inclusive multicultural diverse classrooms. Areas for further research could involve an expansion of the current study to include rural, suburban, and more racially diverse classrooms; further investigation into the critical leadership traits these teachers described as salient to their ability to enact just, authentic learning environments; a deeper look at social justice teachers to include various stakeholders’ perspectives.

Building on the findings of this study, future research might explore the following questions:

- How can teacher education programs structure their programs to effectively and sufficiently equip future teachers to overcome the challenges in multicultural diverse classrooms?
- How can schools provide support to teachers who are unsure of how to implement multiple approaches into their daily practices?
Teacher’s Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

- How can school administrators influence current and future teachers to incorporate a social justice framework into their teaching practices?

- How do students perceive social justice instructional framework which they think to learn?

From my research experience, I learned a great deal about the subject matter of this research. The greatest benefit accrued from applying analytical skills to research problems, especially when given the freedom and responsibilities to work alone for extended periods of time. While reviewing the previous literature to identify key findings, I learned how to select articles that address my main question and how to compare the literature to look for shortcomings. The structure of this study contributed greatly to my ability to carry out independent research by challenging me to think critically. My advisor’s role was to provide a strong background in qualitative research methods, helping select an appropriate method to apply to the questions at hand. Our relationship has been, and continues to be, that of colleagues, with each of us bringing strengths to the table and increasing the other’s knowledge. I learned a great deal about coding and data analysis techniques, how to select the proper approach to a problem, and much about refining and applying my analytical skills. I am grateful to all my teacher participants who willingly contributed to my knowledge and understanding by sharing their own personal experiences thorough their teaching journey in such unique classrooms.
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Teacher’s Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms


Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms


Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms


Teacher’s Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms


Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms


Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ___________________

Dear ___________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am conducting a Major Teaching Project Paper on teachers’ perspectives towards diverse multicultural classroom. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Arlo Kmpf. My research supervisor is Ann Marie Chudleigh. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40-60 minutes interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: Sabah Hoosein

Phone number, email: Sabah.hoosein@mail.utoronto.ca.
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Instructor’s Name: __________________________ Email: __________________________

Research Supervisor’s Name: Ann Marie Chudleigh
Phone #: ______________________ Email: ______________________

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by ______________________(name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________________

Name (printed): ___________________________________

Date: ______________________
Teacher’ Perspectives and Multicultural Diverse Classrooms

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaires & Interview Questions

Demographic Questionnaires

1. Tell me how many schools/boards you have worked at, and whether they were culturally diverse contexts.

2. Please list the grade levels that you have taught during the course of your career as a teacher, between grades 4-10.

3. From your personal experience, what do you find to be effective teaching in multicultural divers classroom? Please give example(s).

The interview questions are:

1) How would you define multicultural diverse classrooms?

2) What do you see your role as being in a diverse ethno-cultural classroom?

3) What are your perspectives and beliefs towards diversity in classroom?

4) What shapes your perspectives or beliefs? Please explain and give me an example from your teaching experiences.

5) In your opinion, what are the best instructional strategies to use in a diverse multicultural classroom?
   i. How do you know that these instructional strategies are effective, based on your experience?
   ii. Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which you adapted specific teaching approaches to suit the diversity in your classroom?
6) What kind of instructional strategies or teaching approaches do you use the most (name as many as you can) and what are their pros/cons?
   
   i. Do you recall a situation where you used an instruction and you found it ineffective, when did it happen and what transpired exactly?

7) When controversies are brought out in the open in a diverse multicultural classroom, what are your reactions, responses, and dispositions?

8) Tell me about your assessment methods and whether you adapt these methods to your students’ differences. How? Give examples.

9) Can you tell me about your lesson and how it looks in a diverse and multicultural classroom? What materials have you found useful?

10) Do you have different expectations of different students on the basis on their diversity?