

Examining teachers' experiences of cultural diversity within a school setting: A Case study of a school in Chris Hani District in South Africa

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Abstract. In an increasingly globalized world, teachers face the challenge of fostering inclusive learning environments that accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds, yet many struggle due to inadequate training and awareness, potentially leading to misunderstandings and exclusion. This interpretive qualitative case study explores teachers' experiences of cultural diversity within a South African school, aiming to understand their role in promoting inclusivity and how their cultural identities shape their attitudes and behaviours toward diverse learners. While cultural diversity enriches classrooms by fostering respect and broadening perspectives, this study highlights a critical gap in the literature: the lack of nuanced research on how teachers' personal beliefs about diversity impact their classroom practices and the overall inclusivity of learning environments. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research focused on a purposively sampled group of teachers and a principal in the Chris Hani District, South Africa. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, with thematic analysis applied to identify key patterns in teachers' experiences. Triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing ensured methodological rigor. The findings reveal that while educators overwhelmingly value cultural diversity, they often lack the training to navigate its complexities effectively, sometimes resulting in unintended exclusion or misunderstandings. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with culturally responsive strategies, ultimately advocating for systemic changes that support equitable and inclusive education. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this research contributes to the broader discourse on multicultural education, offering actionable insights into the challenges and opportunities of teaching in culturally diverse classrooms.

Keywords: Cultural diversity, teachers' experiences, inclusivity, South Africa, educational context, multicultural education.

1. Introduction

Cultural diversity within school settings is an increasingly significant topic in educational research, particularly as schools become more multicultural. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering inclusive learning environments, making their engagement essential for

addressing cultural diversity's challenges (Markey et al., 2023). As defined by Jackson (2019), cultural diversity encompasses various religious and cultural belief systems within educational institutions. In today's globalised world, communities are more diverse, with individuals from multiple ethnic backgrounds coexisting and sharing practices. This multicultural setting has significant educational implications as schools prepare learners to thrive in a pluralistic society where they encounter diverse opinions and values (Thomas & Parker, 2018).

Research indicates that educators must create a peaceful and respectful environment for students from various cultural backgrounds to prevent feelings of exclusion or isolation (Markey et al., 2023). They should encourage open communication and exchanging ideas without imposing their artistic perspectives. Positive and negative classroom experiences can result from cultural diversity in a school (Drkheim, 2022). On the one hand, when learners learn to value and respect various ideas, it may foster a more welcoming atmosphere; on the other hand, if learners are not taught to respect differing beliefs, misunderstandings and confrontations may arise.

This interpretive qualitative case study explores teachers' experiences of cultural diversity within a school setting in the Chris Hani District of South Africa. The researchers identified a gap in existing literature regarding teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity and its impact on inclusivity in educational contexts. Previous studies have primarily focused on learner experiences or broader issues of religious inclusion, leaving significant questions about teachers' perspectives unanswered.

International research on teachers' responses to cultural diversity reveals varied opinions and strategies across different contexts. For instance, a study involving secondary school teachers from six European countries highlighted how personal histories influence responses to cultural diversity (Everington et al., 2011). As it is widely known that all learners come from different cultural backgrounds, experiencing a new culture that is different from the one they know can cause them to respond differently because they are not used to it

In contrast, research on African educators' perceptions remains limited. Studies by Soudien (2019) and Eshiwani and Edem (2017) indicate that teachers face numerous challenges when addressing cultural diversity due to a lack of training and awareness regarding different artistic practices. It is difficult for teachers to establish an inclusive atmosphere for pupils from different cultural backgrounds in some African nations when dominant religious group or religious traditions have strong influence on the education system. The influence of dominant languages in education further complicates this issue by undermining the importance of cultural infusion in teaching (Arowol, 2024).

In South Africa specifically, previous studies have documented teachers' struggles when dealing with cultural differences, often stemming from inadequate knowledge and skills (Babiker & Mpendukana, 2019; Pillay, 2017). This study is valuable within the school setting as it provides insights into how teachers navigate cultural diversity, informing teacher training and inclusive education strategies. Research shows that many educators feel unprepared to handle multicultural classrooms due to inadequate training (Gay, 2018; Markey et al., 2023). Culturally responsive teaching enhances student engagement, reduces conflicts, and improves academic performance (Banks, 2019; Thapa et al., 2021). In South Africa, where historical inequalities persist, understanding teachers' experiences can help develop sustainable inclusion strategies (Soudien, 2019; Babiker & Mpendukana, 2019). This study bridges the gap between policy and practice by offering evidence-based recommendations for fostering inclusive learning environments.

This study seeks to fill the research gap by examining how teachers' cultural identities influence their attitudes and behaviours towards diverse learners. By understanding these dynamics, we can better address educators' challenges while promoting an inclusive educational environment.

1.1 Perspectives on cultural diversity in classroom settings

In Europe and China, cultural diversity in education has also been explored. For instance, a study in Europe, Germany, and Italy found that teachers must be trained to handle cultural diversity in their classrooms and be aware of their cultural biases (Alismail, 2016). In China, a study found that teachers need to be more aware of the cultural backgrounds of their learners and that they need to be better prepared to handle cultural conflicts in the classroom (Wang et al., 2022). In the United States, in Los Angeles and Chicago, schools that serve large numbers of students of colour, which are black Americans, are least likely to offer the kind of curriculum and teaching needed to meet the new standards being enacted across the states and to help students attain the skills required for a knowledge work economy (Hammond, 2017).

In Zambia and Mozambique, cultural diversity in education has also been studied. For example, the study found that teachers need to be more aware of the cultural backgrounds of their learners to create a more inclusive learning environment (Steenkamp, 2021). In Zambia, a study found that cultural diversity can be a source of school conflict and that teachers must be better equipped to handle these conflicts (Arani et al., 2019). In South Africa, for example, desegregation has been a key focus of education for over a decade as the country seeks to accommodate its diverse society (Meier & Hartell, 2018). However, many teachers in South Africa need more training in multicultural education to effectively handle the diversity in their classrooms (Alismail, 2016). Similarly, a study in Russia and Taiwan found that teachers' attitudes towards cultural diversity can be changed through everyday pedagogical practice and that teachers need to be better prepared to handle learners with immigrant backgrounds (Wang, Lan et al., 2022).

1.2 Strategies teachers adopt to promote social cohesion

In Australia and America, research on multicultural competence has emphasised the need for preservice teacher training to equip educators to teach diverse learners better (Cheryl & Lehman, 2017). This includes preparing teachers to appreciate and understand various cultural perspectives, aligning with the broader concept of global competence. This competence enables students to analyse local, international, and intercultural issues while respecting worldviews. UNESCO recommends integrating global citizenship education and education for sustainable development in teacher education programs, ensuring educators are prepared for diverse classrooms. Virtual courses are also suggested to facilitate global dialogues, fostering respect and understanding among students from different cultures.

Norton & Toohey, (2019) suggests that inclusive teaching practices can empower students by valuing their cultural identities, especially in language learning. In South Africa, studies like Jackson (2018) stress the importance of teacher training to help educators understand and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives, which is crucial for fostering social cohesion in the classroom.

These insights highlight the need for teachers worldwide to adopt strategies such as culturally responsive teaching, intercultural dialogue, and global citizenship education. Such approaches create a more inclusive and respectful environment for students from diverse backgrounds, promoting social cohesion in the classroom and beyond.

2. Theoretical framework

The concept of multicultural education theory, developed by James A. Banks (1984), serves as a foundational framework for understanding how teachers can navigate cultural diversity in their classrooms. However, while this theory emphasises the integration of multicultural perspectives into the curriculum, it is essential to examine how teachers in specific contexts, such as the Chris Hani District in South Africa, experience and respond to cultural diversity. Studies conducted in South African schools, including the Eastern

Cape region, reveal that teachers often face significant challenges when managing classrooms with diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds.

For instance, research by Chisholm (2003) highlighted that teachers in multicultural classrooms across South Africa often struggle with language barriers, cultural tensions, and diverse educational needs—the lack of sufficient training in multicultural education results in missed opportunities for promoting inclusive teaching practices. In rural areas like Chris Hani, these challenges are compounded by a lack of resources and professional development opportunities, limiting teachers' capacity to implement effective multicultural strategies.

Similarly, Muller's (2019) study within the Eastern Cape region revealed that despite recognising the importance of multicultural education, teachers faced substantial barriers in its practical application. Teachers often find integrating cultural diversity into their teaching practices brutal due to resource constraints and limited access to ongoing professional development, which aligns with Banks' (2016) call for inclusive pedagogies. In rural districts such as Chris Hani, where infrastructural support is minimal, these barriers are particularly pronounced, further illustrating the gap between theoretical frameworks and the realities faced by educators.

Furthermore, Venter and Ngcobo (2017) explored the impact of religious diversity. They found that teachers in the Eastern Cape struggled to balance respect for students' religious identities with maintaining a neutral classroom environment. This mirrors the challenges discussed in the multicultural education theory, which advocates for integrating diverse cultural and spiritual perspectives into the classroom. However, teachers in areas like Chris Hani report a lack of support in navigating these complexities, resulting in difficulties when addressing students' diverse religious and cultural identities.

These studies collectively underscore the importance of teacher preparation and ongoing professional development in navigating cultural and religious diversity (Brown & Lee, 2019; Smith, 2020;). While multicultural education theory provides an essential framework for promoting inclusivity, the practical challenges teachers face in districts like Chris Hani reveal a need for context-specific strategies and support (Johnson, 2021). Therefore, your study should reflect on these findings and critically examine how teachers' lived experiences with cultural diversity in Chris Hani influence their teaching practices and how educational policies can be improved to support teachers in such diverse contexts (Ngcobo & Mahlangu, 2018).

2.1 The concept of Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity refers to various cultures and ethnicities within a society. It encompasses differences in language, beliefs, traditions, customs, and values among individuals or groups (Thomas & Ely, 2019). This concept has gained significant attention in recent years due to globalisation, migration, and the increasing recognition of the importance of cultural inclusivity (Thomas & Ely, 2019). Cultural diversity is essential for promoting inclusive and equitable learning environments in education. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization the significance of intercultural education in fostering cultural understanding, respect, and dialogue among different communities (UNESCO, 2018). Intercultural education aims to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to interact respectfully with others from diverse cultural backgrounds. Research on cultural diversity has explored various aspects of this concept and its implications. Lee (2017) examined the impact of cultural diversity on social cohesion, cross-cultural communication, and identity formation. Recent literature has also focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by cultural diversity in the workplace, such as managing diverse teams and promoting employee cultural competence (Thomas & Ely, 2019).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a valuable qualitative research methodology for understanding the meanings, opinions, and lived experiences of teachers (McLeod, 2023). This type of research aims to gather and analyse non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences. It was useful for this paper because the researcher used it to understand the meaning that teachers attach to their experiences or when they want to uncover the underlying reasons for people's behaviour (McLeod, 2023)

Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of teachers' experiences with cultural diversity. By adopting a multi-informant approach, the study seeks to identify and classify teachers' attitudes toward cultural diversity in the classroom while investigating different cultural diversity approaches used in schools. A research design is an overall strategy that integrates different study components to address the research problem effectively (McCombes, 2021). It serves as a blueprint for data collection, measurement, and analysis (Tobi & Kampel, 2019). Various research designs exist, including cross-sectional, experimental, case-control, cohort, and qualitative (Ranganathan & Aggarwal, 2020).

This study employs a descriptive phenomenological research design, which seeks to understand a phenomenon through participants' lived experiences (Lindseth & Norberg, 2021). The descriptive phenomenological method is appropriate for this study as it aims to capture teachers' experiences with cultural diversity in schools while setting aside biases and preconceived notions (Deakin University, 2022). In this case study, the descriptive phenomenological method is used to shed light around the experiences of teachers' when it comes to cultural diversity in schools. The descriptive phenomenological research design is suitable for this study because it attempts to describe how human beings experience a certain phenomenon. A research population refers to a well-defined group of individuals or objects that share common characteristics relevant to a study (Abacioglu et al., 2020). Given the large number of teachers in the Chris Hani District, this study focused on one selected school. The accessible population comprises teachers and principals with experience working with culturally diverse learners.

The study sample includes nine teachers and one principal. According to Vassallo, (2021) population sampling is the process of choosing several groups of units such that the combined results of the groups selected produce as close to the same average or proportion as the totality with respect to those characteristics that are already known statistically. The sample must have sufficient size to warrant the analysis (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The study used purposive sampling to select teachers who have experience working with culturally diverse learners in one selected school in Chris-Hani District. This technique is best used when the researcher wants to focus in-depth on a relatively small sample size. Purposive sampling is often used when the researcher has a clear idea of the characteristics or attributes, they are interested in studying and wants to select a sample that is representative to those characteristics (Dovetail, 2023). This sample size aligns with qualitative research principles, ensuring data saturation and comprehensive exploration of themes, including a principal offering administrative perspectives that complement teachers' insights (Hall, 2012). The participants were selected based on their teaching experience in culturally diverse classrooms, with a range of teaching experience from novice to highly experienced educators. The school selected is in an urban area, serving a student population representing multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This study employs semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in questioning while enabling participants to articulate their experiences. Open-ended questions facilitate more profound insights into teachers' attitudes toward cultural diversity (Cote, 2021). The interview guide was developed based on a review of the literature on multicultural education and refined through expert feedback to ensure its validity. The face validity of the interview questions was established through consultation with educational researchers and experienced teachers, ensuring that the questions effectively captured teachers'

experiences with cultural diversity. The principal's interview lasted the longest due to their broader scope of responsibilities. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy, with handwritten notes as backup data. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and participants were allowed to review their transcripts for accuracy. The interview process was conducted in a private setting within the school to ensure confidentiality and encourage open discussion.

Thematic analysis was conducted by coding and categorising data to identify recurring themes and patterns in teachers' narratives. Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study as it enables a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teachers' experiences with cultural diversity. The findings were then interpreted within the existing literature on multicultural education. Multiple strategies were employed to enhance the study's trustworthiness and ensured the findings accurately represented the participants' experiences. Triangulation was used by cross-checking findings with different data sources, including teachers and the principal. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify accuracy. Peer debriefing was also utilised, where another researcher reviewed the coding and interpretations to reduce bias (Cresswell, 2028).

This study is limited to one secondary public school in the Chris Hani District, where interviews were conducted with nine teachers and one principal. The reliance on self-reported data presents a potential limitation, as participants may not fully disclose their experiences. Additionally, the study's context-specific nature may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings.

This study adhered to ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity (Walter Sisulu University, 2025). The study received ethical clearance from the University's Ethics Committee, ensuring compliance with research ethics regulations. Participants were informed about the recording process and allowed to use handwritten notes as an alternative. The school granted access for teacher participation, and pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality. All data collected is securely stored, and participants retain the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects were strictly followed (Hashemi, 2021).

3.1 Data presentation and analysis

Specific codes identify the participants in the study, but the codes do not correspond to their cultural backgrounds, reflecting a diverse representation within the sample. These cultural backgrounds encompass a range of identities, including Coloured and African. This diversity reflects the multicultural landscape of the educational setting under investigation, where teachers interact with learners from different cultural backgrounds in a specific school setting. The data sought to answer the following research questions:

- How do teachers in Chris Hani District experience and perceive cultural diversity in their diverse classrooms?
- In what ways do teachers' cultural identities and those of learners influence their attitudes and classroom practices towards culturally diverse learners?
- What challenges and opportunities do teachers encounter when promoting an inclusive learning environment in culturally diverse classrooms and how can professional development address these issues?

The findings are organised by assigning codes to the participants. These codes represent different roles, such as teachers, with codes ranging from T-1 to T-9 and the principal, coded as PR10. This method allows for anonymising participants while presenting the results effectively.

4. Findings

The study's findings are provided under the themes from the data collected using the interviews to answer research questions. This part presents and discusses data that were collected using interviews. The discussion is divided into main themes that emerged from the data collected.

4.1. Experiences of cultural diversity

The data collected collectively reflect a range of experiences, from positive enrichment to challenges and mixed feelings, as well as instances where participants may not have strong views or notable experiences regarding cultural diversity in their schools.

4.2. Positive Experiences and Enrichment

Cultural diversity is revealed within the school setting, as expressed by educators in T1 to T5, indicating positive experiences and enrichment of cultures. The participants shared their reflections on the multifaceted impact of cultural diversity, ranging from the valuable lessons learned from diverse student backgrounds to the intentional efforts in fostering inclusive atmospheres. The participants revealed a nuanced perspective beyond mere acknowledgement, portraying a proactive engagement with the challenges and triumphs of embracing cultural diversity within the school setting.

T1- I have had positive experiences with cultural diversity in my school. I have learned a lot from my students from diverse backgrounds and seen how their cultural experiences can enrich the learning environment.

T2- My school has had some challenges with cultural diversity, but overall, we have a positive attitude towards it. We have tried to learn about our students' cultural backgrounds and create an inclusive atmosphere.

T3- My experiences with cultural diversity in my school have been mixed. While I have seen some success in fostering a respectful and inclusive environment, I have also encountered some resistance from students and parents who may not be as open to cultural diversity.

T4- At our school, we have had some good experiences with cultural diversity but also faced challenges. We have learned from these experiences and adjusted our approach to effectively promote a culture of inclusion and understanding.

T5- Overall, my views on cultural diversity in my school are positive. Our diverse student body enriches the learning environment, and we have made progress in fostering a respectful and inclusive atmosphere.

T1 begins by unequivocally stating positive experiences with cultural diversity, emphasising the wealth of knowledge gained from students with diverse backgrounds. This sentiment is echoed in T2, where, despite acknowledging challenges, the overall attitude towards cultural diversity remains positive. T3 introduces a note of realism, highlighting mixed experiences that encompass both successes in creating a respectful and inclusive environment. T4 delves into the learning curve, acknowledging the school's positive aspects and challenges. Finally, T5 encapsulates a collective optimism, emphasising the belief that a diverse student body contributes to an enriched learning environment and underscores the progress in fostering respect and inclusivity.

4.3. Mixed experiences with challenges

Within the broader context of educators' perspectives on cultural diversity, a subset of data collected from participants T3, T7, and PR10 reveals a theme characterised by mixed experiences, encapsulating both successes and challenges. This nuanced stance emphasises the dynamic nature of managing cultural diversity within the school setting. As participants navigate the complexities of fostering inclusivity, acknowledging encountered resistance and conflicts adds a layer of realism to the narrative. This theme sheds light on the delicate balance educators must strive to create an environment that

appreciates diversity while mitigating potential conflicts that may arise. Participants T3 and T7 said that:

T3- My experiences with cultural diversity in my school have been mixed. While I have seen some success in fostering a respectful and inclusive environment, I have also encountered some resistance from students and parents who may not be as open to cultural diversity.

T7- Yes, I do have a bad experience; there was this incident at our school in a situation meeting; this one teacher was against the opening a bible and conducting a prayer in an assembly; he said he is not a Christian, why is he forced to perform a prayer and open a bible while he is not a Christian and how do we make sure that all learners are Christians, why do we assume instead of allowing staff and learners to pray what they believe in. So, that was a bad experience for me; I never thought that culture could lead to conflict.

PR10- As I mentioned in the previous question, Christianity rules the school, but some learners do not practice that culture; it creates division among the learners and the teachers.

T3 reflects on a varied journey with cultural diversity, portraying a landscape where success in fostering a respectful and inclusive environment coexists with instances of resistance from specific learners and parents. This duality introduces complexity, emphasising educators' need to navigate diverse perspectives actively. Meanwhile, T7 and PR10 provide a concrete example of a challenging situation where cultural diversity led to conflict within the school community. The situation involving resistance to prayer in an assembly exposes the potential resistance that may emerge due to differing cultural beliefs, underlining the reality that, despite best intentions, cultural diversity can become a source of tension.

4.4. Lack of strong views or experiences

In exploring educators' perspectives on cultural diversity, distinct data emerges wherein some respondents express a lack of strong views or notable experiences of cultural diversity in the school environment. This data sheds light on the variability in participants' engagements with cultural diversity, highlighting that not every teacher perceives or experiences cultural diversity significantly in an impactful manner within their educational settings. Participants T8 and T9 said that:

T8- Fair.

T9- No.

The data either express a neutral stance (T8 - "Fair") or indicate a lack of significant experiences with cultural diversity in the school (T9 - "No"). In the case of T8, it is brief and does not provide specific details. At the same time, T9 states that their response has not been notable experiences, possibly suggesting that the school environment has not presented significant challenges or noteworthy positive experiences related to cultural diversity.

5. Discussion of findings

5.1 Teachers' experiences of cultural diversity within the school setting

The study revealed that teachers sincerely appreciate the benefits of cultural diversity in the classroom, viewing it as an opportunity for personal and professional growth. This aligns with the findings of Thomas and Ely (2019), who argue that diverse cultural backgrounds contribute to innovation, creativity, and a broader understanding of different perspectives. Teachers in the study recognised that cultural diversity enriches the learning environment, offering valuable experiences for students and themselves. Their positive outlook reflects the broader view in education that diversity can foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The study also highlighted how teachers view disputes arising from religious and cultural differences. Rather than seeing these as obstacles, teachers viewed them as opportunities for learning and growth. This perspective contrasts with the traditional view, which often sees such conflicts as disruptive. In contrast, research by Gorski (2010) notes that cultural tensions can escalate without proper management. However, teachers in this study found that addressing these tensions constructively could lead to productive discussions. This view is supported by Ahmed and Smith (2020), who found that multicultural classrooms often foster constructive dialogue despite cultural and religious conflicts.

Despite these opportunities, teachers acknowledged the challenges of managing cultural and religious diversity in the classroom. They emphasised the need for training to navigate these complexities; a sentiment echoed in Alismail's (2016) research, which stresses the importance of professional development for managing diverse classrooms. Studies such as those by the National Education Association (2014) also show that many teachers feel additional training in cultural awareness and classroom management would be beneficial. This highlights the global need for targeted support to help teachers handle cultural diversity effectively.

Bias awareness was another key theme of the study. Teachers recognised the need to reflect on their biases and become more culturally responsive. This aligns with literature highlighting self-awareness's role in addressing biases and fostering inclusivity. Researchers like Tatum (2017) and Gay (2018) emphasise that teachers must continuously self-reflect and train to create equitable learning environments. Studies by the American Psychological Association (2016) show that teachers who undergo bias-awareness training are better equipped to foster inclusive classrooms, further supporting the study's findings.

In conclusion, the study's findings confirm and extend existing research on cultural diversity in education. Teachers see the benefits and challenges of cultural and religious diversity, recognising the need for training, bias awareness, and conflict resolution skills. By embracing diversity and viewing challenges as opportunities, teachers can enhance the learning experience for all students.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendation to the department of education

Educational institutions must invest in professional development programs that focus on cultural competence for educators. Training should encompass a deep understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds, effective communication strategies, and conflict-resolution skills. This will empower educators to navigate the complexities of cultural diversity more adeptly and foster an inclusive environment where students feel valued and respected.

6.2 Recommendation to the school management teams and teachers

Schools should actively promote and implement inclusive policies that reflect the celebration of diversity with the help of the school management team. These policies should address disciplinary matters, language barriers, and negative attitudes towards cultural diversity. Schools can establish support structures, such as counselling services, to assist learners and teachers in addressing conflicts related to cultural differences. A robust policy framework will create a positive cultural climate within the school, ensuring that equality is upheld and that every student's cultural identity is respected.

6.3 Recommendation to the communities

Community engagement is crucial for building a supportive and inclusive educational environment. Schools should collaborate with parents, community leaders, and cultural experts to create a holistic approach to managing cultural diversity. Cultural awareness campaigns, events, and workshops involving the broader community can contribute to breaking down stereotypes and fostering understanding. By actively involving all stakeholders, schools can create a harmonious environment that respects cultural diversity.

and leverages it as a valuable educational resource, enriching the overall learning experience for students. According to a study by Gill (2019), it might be difficult for teachers to control the classroom and guarantee that every learner is treated fairly and equitably. Making lesson plans inclusive of all diverse groups results in no learner feeling excluded, which may sometimes be challenging in the learning context.

Understanding how teachers handle learner cultural diversity in the classroom is crucial for fostering a secure and welcoming learning environment for all learners (Keddie, 2020). Teachers should be prepared to foster a classroom climate of respect and understanding by being informed of their learners' diverse cultural practices and beliefs. Teachers must also be ready to discuss any possible concerns relating to cultural differences to ensure that all learners feel at ease and welcome in the learning environment.

6.4 Recommendations to universities

Universities should consider offering a module on inclusive education, a significant subject for all candidates training to be teachers. This may eliminate many factors that contribute to cultural diversity problems.

7. Conclusion

The study sought to explore teachers' experiences with cultural diversity in a selected school in the Chris Hani District. This exploration was prompted by the recognition that educators often manage a range of cultural perspectives within the classroom, which may present opportunities and challenges. This study investigated how teachers understand and manage cultural diversity within the school environment. Specifically, it aimed to explore their perceptions of culture, cultural diversity, and the strategies they employ to navigate these aspects in a school setting. The findings reveal that teachers broadly understand culture as a dynamic entity encompassing shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts. Cultural diversity is an opportunity to celebrate different perspectives, promote inclusivity, and foster mutual understanding. Teachers' perceptions of school culture vary, with some highlighting the absence of a dominant culture in favour of diversity. In contrast, others point to specific dominant cultures, such as Christianity or the Xhosa tribe. Strategies to ensure equality include fostering dialogue and challenging stereotypes. Teachers also shared mixed experiences with cultural diversity—some praised the enriched learning environment it creates, while others faced challenges such as resistance from students or parents. The study emphasised the importance of actively managing cultural diversity and addressing challenges such as disciplinary issues, language barriers, and negative attitudes. In religiously diverse contexts, teachers viewed cultural diversity as an opportunity for personal and professional growth despite potential conflicts. Strategies such as creating inclusive environments, establishing ground rules, and staying informed about various perspectives were identified to promote respect and understanding.

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