DOES LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IMPACT ON SCHOOLING SUCCESS FOR AFRICAN LEARNERS ? A CASE STUDY OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN DURBAN.

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A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL
DURBAN
1998

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

ABSTRACT.

With the move towards multicultural education in South Africa, previously "whites only" schools now face the challenge of educating learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This study examined the extent to which limited English language proficiency impacts on schooling success for learners with Limited English Proficiency (L.E.P.). The study explored how these L.E.P. learners experienced the curriculum at a particular secondary school in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, and the extent to which this school responded to the challenges of diversity in its learner population. The study used a qualitative research methodology. The sample comprised 24 learners from Grade 10. The data collection techniques used were the focussed group interview, and document analysis of school documents. The findings indicate that the language issue is complex and cannot be explored as an isolated variable. Various other mediating factors interact to impact on schooling success for learners with limited English language proficiency. (Some of these factors are race; class; culture; school ethos; norms and value; the school curriculum; and the socio-economic background of learners). The results also reveal that, although the school policy and ethos at the school reflects a commitment to racial integration and a positive response to cultural diversity among its learners, assimilationist practices still prevail. Attempts to integrate elements of 'other' cultural wordviews have been largely token representation of the diverse cultures. The curriculum continues to reflect the dominant culture with little meaningful affirmation of learners' diverse cultural and linguistic roots. Limited English Proficiency (L.E.P.) learners often experience alienation and marginalisation from the curriculum and the culture of the school. Simply assimilating Limited English Proficiency learners into the curriculum as it is does not guarantee the equalisation of educational opportunities for all learners. Much restructuring of the curriculum is necessary to fulfil the goals of multicultural education.

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION.

1.1 The Context of Schooling in South Africa.

1.1.1 The pattern of school organisation, governance and funding.

South Africa's constitutional dispensation of 1984 stipulated that education was an 'own affair' and, until 1994, the South African education system had fifteen different ethnically divided administrative Departments of Education. Included in these departments were Education Departments for the homelands : QwaQwa, Ciskei, Venda, Gazankulu, KwaNdebele, Bophuthatswana, Lebowa, KaNgwane, KwaZulu, and the Transkei. The Department of National Education, dealt with general education policy for all race groups. Five education departments were made responsible for education outside the homelands : House of Assembly (HOA), House of Delegates (HOD), House of Representatives (HOR), and the Department of Education and Training (DET). These divisions were reinforced by the inequalities in resources available to, and subsequently the quality of education offered by departments catering for different race groups. The schools for whites were at the top of the quality scale, followed by those for Indians, coloureds and Africans. State schools for whites were the best resourced and best staffed schools in the state system. According to the Report of the National Review Committee on the Organistaion, Governance and Funding of Schools (Department of Education, 1995), per capita expenditure on whites was approximately four times that for Africans.

With regard to racial policies, government policy on education can be summarised as follows (Bot, 1991) :
- education was provided separately for each population group;
- educational institutions for a particular population group could provide education to members of another population group by way of exception, as long as this did not jeopardise the character of the institution concerned. Preference was given to members of the population group for whom the institution was established.

However, the white education department was the least inclined to accept pupils from other race groups. As a consequence, the only black children that were admitted to white schools were those of diplomats and of foreign parents. (Bot, 1991).

1.1.2 The introduction of additional models for the provision of schooling.

In a document distributed by the Natal Education Department, September 1990, Natal schools were provided with information about the additional models for the provision of education in the province. The additional models would give individual schools a greater degree of authority in the governance and administration of their schools. Schools could choose to change their existing ordinary public school to one of the following additional models :

- a private school (Model A)
- an ordinary state school which determines its own admission policy within the provisions of the Constitution (Model B)
- a state-aided school (Model C)

Schools that wanted to change their admission policy were required to conduct an opinion poll among parents. A minimum of 72% of those entitled to vote had to vote in favour of the change, and at least 80% of parents were required to participate in the poll.

After an ordinary public school was closed and established as a state-aided school, of Model C status, the operating, financial and admissions implications involved were as follows :

- The existing Management Council of the school was dissolved, and the school had to appoint a managing body, which consisted of representatives of the parent community. This managing body of state-aided schools would control and manage all aspects of the schools, in accordance with legislation. Their responsibilities included managing the school's funds independently, appointing staff members and administrative personnel, maintenance of physical facilities, determining tuition fees, and generating further funds.

- The financial implications of a change to Model C status, were that the state would subsidise the salaries only of staff appointed within the prescribed norm (according to a fixed learner : teacher ratio). In practice, this amounted to approximately 75 % of the operating expenses. All remaining expenses would, therefore, have to be found by the governing body.

- With regard to admissions, the majority of pupils had to be white (at least 51%) if the school wished to remain registered with the white education department. Any change in admission policy could not detract from the traditional values and ethos of the schools, and preference was given to white learners from the schools' feeder areas.

The degree of racial integration in these schools depended on support from parents, staff and pupils. Among white South Africans, one out of five supported strict segregation, while nearly three out of five supported partial or complete integration (Bot, 1991). In view of the opposition to racial integration in some quarters, it was a recommendation that it should not be **enforced**, but that it should, instead, occur voluntarily. It was further recommended that racial integration be made attractive through financial or other benefits. In April 1992, most of the state schools for whites were informed by the Government that state funding to the schools would be cut.

An overwhelming majority of state, or ordinary public schools chose to convert to "Model C" status. Converting to "Model C" status gave individual schools a greater degree of authority in the governance and administration of their schools. With the imminent changes and insecurity of South Africa's educational future, a greater degree of authority would have been welcomed.

The Report of the National Review Committee on the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools (Department of Education, 1995) points out that a major drawback of these additional models in education was that the present segregated system could be perpetuated, instead of it promoting integration. Schools formerly reserved for particular race groups, could still largely be occupied by members of these groups.

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Despite the fact that some African children were admitted to the schools formerly reserved for whites, coloureds and Indians, a learner's race could still be one of the major determinants of the educational opportunities available to them. Racial integration in itself was not enough to solve the problem of inequity. Racism and racial segregation could still exist within a system of racial integration.

Although these changes did not adequately address the problems and needs facing the provision of education in South Africa, for the first time in the history of South Africa, the Government was willing to become directly responsible for providing multiracial education. While these options had certain drawbacks, as they applied in situations where segregation was still the norm, they provided for some flexibility until such time as a new constitution was accepted.

1.2 Current educational legislation and policy in South Africa.

The White Paper on Education and Training (March, 1995), proposed a new policy for school provision which was committed to increasing access to all learners and redressing educational inequalities by guaranteeing non-discrimination and equal access to educational institutions. The South African Schools Act (1996) guarantees equal access to educational institutions (Section 32). Schools are prohibited from discriminating unfairly on the grounds of any difference. With regard to admission of learners to public schools, the South African Schools Act, 1996, stated that :

> *"A public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way."* (5:1)

> *"The governing body, the principal, or any other person, may not administer any test related to the admission of a learner to a public school."* (5:2)

While the admission policy of public schools were to be determined by the governing body of these schools, the S.A. Schools Act (1996) guarantees non-discrimination and equal access to **all** learners.

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With regard to the language policy of public schools, the S.A. Schools Act (1996), while permitting the governing bodies of these schools to determine their language policies, stipulates that :

> *"No form of racial discrimination may be practised in implementing language policy."* (6:3)

All education policy documents that have emerged since 1994 stress a rights discourse, which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). It stresses the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. All schools have to respect the fundamental rights of learners, which ensure non-discrimination and equal access to educational institutions. Schools, therefore, which had discriminated unfairly in the past for whatever reasons, are required in terms of the Constitution to change their practices.

1.3 Motivation for the study.

The reconstruction of educational policies in South Africa is an attempt to address the legacies of inequitable development and under-development that has been established over the generations of minority rule and ethnically-based educational policies in South Africa. It is seen as essential, to build a system of education founded on equity and non-discrimination, and the respect for diversity, as the training ground for a society that respects both the differences and the dignity of all human beings. Current educational philosophy and legislation in South Africa emphasises the principles of : **quality education for all,** and, **equal access to the curriculum for all learners.** (The White Paper on Education and Training, 1995 ; The South African Schools Act, 1996). The vision driving all educational policy reconstruction in South Africa is one of providing learning opportunities for **all,** based on the constitutional guarantee of *equal educational rights for all* persons. This commitment to education for all, calls for a transformation of education in South Africa - an educational restructuring that includes those learners previously excluded or marginalised.

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With the move towards multicultural schools, and the integration of population groups traditionally defined as "other", South African classrooms have become increasingly diverse. Previously "whites only" schools now face the challenge of teaching learners from diverse cultural, linguistic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. If our education system is to uphold the vision of equity and non-discrimination, not only do our schools need to cater for the diverse needs of its learners, but also to challenge apartheid's ideology of racism and subsequent dominant relations of power.

However, it is a concern that most previously "whites only" schools are simply attempting to assimilate learners with diverse needs into the existing curriculum. Assimilation neglects the importance of the role of the institution in adapting to meet the changing needs of learner populations. Furthermore, mere assimilation may result in the possible perpetuation of an ideology and culture that continues to situate difference in structures of dominance. Multicultural education, while reflecting the multiracial and cultural pluralism of South Africa, and while seeming to offer equal access to education for all learners, may still serve to maintain social and racial power structures.

1.4   Aims of the study.

The study examined the extent to which this particular secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal has responded to the challenges of diversity in the learner population. The school, Mowat Park High, was one of the ordinary public schools that chose to convert to "Model C" status in 1992. The aim of this case study was to explore how learners with Limited English Proficiency experienced their education at this English-medium secondary school in Durban. In addition, it investigated the learners' perceptions on, and their experiences of racism at the school.

1.5 Limited English Proficiency.

The concept of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) learner is familiar from overseas literature on multilingual and multicultural education, but is relatively unknown in South Africa. (Nieto, 1996). The distinction between the English Second Language (ESL) learner and the LEP learner is a useful one when adapted to the South African context. English as a second language is inadequate when describing the needs of the black learner learning through the medium of English. (Barkhuizen, 1995; Lemmer, 1995; Squelch, 1994). Although seemingly sufficiently fluent in English, these pupils often lack the command of English that is necessary for school success. Placed in the same classes as native English speakers, they are at risk of under achievement. Unlike the traditional ESL pupil in the South African context, these pupils not only have to satisfy the standards of the subject, English First Language, on a par with native English speakers, but also have to use English as the medium of learning for all content subjects.

In an endeavour to conceptualise the needs of these pupils, a distinction is therefore drawn between the ESL pupil, instructed through the medium of Afrikaans and learning English Second Language as a school subject, and the pupil with a limited proficiency in English, for whom exposure to English may range from a foreign language to a second language, yet is required to master all academic content for all or most of the years of schooling through the medium of English. In the context of the multilingual classroom, the principles of ESL instruction as traditionally understood and practised in South Africa, are inadequate for the effective teaching of the LEP pupil. This distinction assists the researcher and the classroom teacher to conceptualise the characteristics and special language needs of the non-English pupil learning through the medium of English. This issue will be further elaborated on in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2 : THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

2.1 Introduction.

Since 1994, one of the urgent priorities for the new South African government was the need for a system of education which would right the wrongs of the apartheid years. It was essential to build a system of education founded on equity and non-discrimination, and respect for diversity. The mono-cultural schools created by apartheid policies, forced people into separate cultural ghettos. A curriculum was needed which would help break down the old myths, ignorance, suspicion, prejudice, fear, and fundamental disrespect between the different races and cultures of South Africa, and instead, value diversity, tolerance and appreciation of cultural differences.

Many schools in South Africa have a learner population reflective of the diversity in the community in terms of race, class, language, gender, ethnicity and religion. However, there has been limited direction from Education Departments on how schools can be more responsive to such diversity. Most schools have developed their own school-based initiatives - many on an ad hoc basis. The present study explores how L.E.P. learners at one school are experiencing their education in a racially integrated schooling context. The study was undertaken within the framework of debates in the area of multicultural education.

2.2 Multicultural Education : Possibilities and Contradictions.

The vision for multicultural education is one of social change. The main component of this ideology is equal opportunity (Sleeter & Grant, 1994). While multicultural education in South Africa, is envisaged as the antithesis of apartheid education, by offering equal opportunity to all cultures and races, many educational theorists are cautious about posing 'multicultural education' as a radical alternative to apartheid education (Moore, 1994).

'Multicultural education' is a popular and 'politically-correct' term, that is increasingly used to label a variety of educational and school practices, not all of which constitute equal opportunity for all learners.

The notion of 'multicultural education' is a much contested issue. This section will look at interpretations of 'multicultural education', in light of its main component, equal opportunity.

2.2.1 The Issue of Equality of Opportunity.

The vision for education in South Africa, is that it function as an effective means of *equalising educational opportunities* for those learners previously marginalised and excluded, under apartheid's segregationist policies (Ball, 1990). A main component of multicultural education, then, is the notion of *equal opportunity*, which implies that all learners are given equal access to the same education. New educational legislation has made it illegal to deny learners access to education on the basis of 'difference' (South African Schools Act, 1996). Multicultural education is seen as a means of offering all learners equal access to the same education. However, exactly what school practices constitute as equal opportunity is an issue of considerable debate. The following sub-sections look at the issue of equality of opportunity, in respect of a number of multicultural school practices.

2.2.1.1   An Assimilationist Approach.

Although many formerly white schools in South Africa are now multiracial, assimilation policies still prevail. This means that 'other' pupils are simply expected to 'fit in' and cope as best they can, with little or no conscious effort on the part of the school to change or adapt in any way to accommodate their needs. Such schools may consider themselves equal opportunity schools, while continuing 'business as usual', making no special attempts to cater for the needs of a diverse learner population. A 'business as usual' policy assumes that the dominant culture not only should, but will prevail. Olivier-Shaw (1994) and Versfeld (1993) explain that 'business as usual' implies that there are no alternative versions of the world, or discourses, and that the dominant culture is the only right one.

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Assimilationist school policies which transmit the view that home cultures of 'other' groups are inferior to the dominant 'target' culture, create and maintain a victim-mentality among those learners belonging to 'other' groups. Such policies are additionally harmful as they reinforce the mistaken idea in the minds of the dominant-group learners that their home culture is the only correct culture and that everyone else should think, behave, and speak as they do. The forms of identities and subjectivities, prejudices and stereotypes, inherent to the apartheid years, are thus reproduced and maintained. In this way the power relations that existed under apartheid, are maintained.

2.2.1.2   A Dominance of Western Worldviews.

A major shortcoming in South African schools that adopt an assimilationist policy, is that they ignore the non-Western worldview and concentrate on the Western, or dominant worldview. European values and perceptions which have been born out of specifically Western situations and historical developments, are imposed upon learners who might experience a different cultural reality. The majority of learners' life experiences are distant from the dominant learning culture, resulting in them experiencing increasing alienation from both the culture involved in the curriculum and the nature of the classroom teaching. Learners find it difficult to learn what the teacher is trying to teach when the teaching style, communication style, cognitive schemata, or background experience of the teacher is different from that of the learners.

Kimball, cited in Sleeter & Grant (1994), explains :

> *"New learnings always take place within the perceptive system of the individual being taught. Pupils from subcultural groups other than those of the teacher face a difficult problem in adjusting, if they do, to the demands of the teacher, and she, in turn, to their ways of behaving and thinking."* (p. 184)

The potential for misunderstanding is extremely high in multicultural classrooms. There has been a rising concern among educators about the sense of meaninglessness, alienation and eventual marginalisation of these learners. If 'legitimate' knowledge does not include the historical experiences and cultural expressions of 'other' learners, schools can function to disempower learners.

Squelch (1994) suggests that learners whose cultural background is different from the dominant culture of the school, have less chance of experiencing academic success than those who belong to the dominant culture. Teachers often have unreasonable expectations, based on unfounded assumptions that everyone shares the same discourse and background knowledge. The learners whose discourse styles do not meet these expectations are mostly those who do not belong to the dominant culture. In schools where the Western worldview dominates, learners of 'other;' ethnic backgrounds are often expected to display the behavioural and linguistic style of the dominant culture, before they are taken seriously (Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

2.2.1.3   Multicultural Education as Amalgamation of Cultures.

There are those educators and theorists who adopt the 'rosy' picture of multicultural education as a simple amalgamation and blending of cultures. Historically, South African society has been structured according to ethnic identities. The concept of 'culture' was, therefore, the major role player in the racist structuring of the apartheid society. It is understandable that recognising and analysing difference, especially difference in terms of culture, could present as a sensitive issue. Issues of 'difference' are therefore, often ignored, and everyone is painted as equal and the same (Sebidi, cited in Moore, 1994).

In their examinations of ethnic identity and acculturation attitudes, Noels, Pon & Clement (1996), have found different results. Some of their sociological studies support the theory of assimilation which holds that when cultural groups classified as 'other' come into contact with the dominant cultural group, over time the values and life styles of the 'other' groups are replaced by those of the dominant group. Some of their studies have found that some degree of cultural assimilation usually occurs, but often it is limited and often reverses itself over time. More accurately, different ethnic, religious and racial groups will assimilate into the dominant culture to some extent, but this assimilation will vary with the group and the individual, and many will continue to retain unique cultural characteristics.

For cultures to blend and amalgamate harmoniously, groups need to be of roughly equal status, and the individuals should have a desire to mix. The history of South Africa has definitely not left all cultural and ethnic groups with the same status. The culture-based structuring of the apartheid society created antagonistic ethnic identities. It follows that various cultural and racial groups generally have negative perceptions of one another, causing the continuation of 'old' stereotypes and prejudices. The belief in the simple amalgamation and blending of diverse cultural groups in schools is largely idealistic and unrealistic.

Making distinctions based on race and culture is unavoidable in the transition phase from monoculturalism to multiculturalism. These distinctions acknowledge the experiences and difficulties of learners raised in a country of apartheid laws, and are necessary to address the existing inter-group misunderstandings, tensions, and intolerance. To ignore these differences, which are a reality to the learners themselves, would be irresponsible and would intensify the potential for inter-group conflict (Centre for Educational Development, 1993). If some degree of cultural diversity is a reality, then it makes sense that schools embrace this diversity rather than pretend that it does not exist, or view it as harmful.

2.2.1.4   Multicultural Education and Equality of Opportunity.

If schools are simply assimilating learners and their diversities into the curriculum as it was conceptualised under the apartheid discourse, simply removing barriers to access does not, then, guarantee the equalisation of educational opportunities for **all** learners. Simply ensuring the smooth assimilation of 'other' groups into the dominant mainstream culture, will continue to legitimise, sanction and privilege some learners, while simultaneously serving to silence, disempower and marginalise others. Multicultural schools, then, while seemingly offering equal opportunities to all its learners, could still act as a mechanism which instils and perpetuates social structures which existed under apartheid. So long as 'other' cultural groups do not gain equal outcomes from educational institutions, those institutions are not providing equal opportunity.

2.3   Multicultural Education and Curriculum Change.

A major component of multicultural education is that it acknowledges the importance of recognising and affirming the home cultures of all learners. Although multicultural education may attempt to integrate elements of a typically non-Western worldview in to the curriculum, it has been criticised for token representation of the diverse cultures. A curriculum can incorporate elements of 'other' cultures, without making much change to the core curriculum, or the dominant culture or ethos of the school. This is considered as token representation. Gay, cited in Sleeter & Grant (1994), explains :

> *"Fragmented and isolated units, courses, and bits of information about ethnic groups interspersed sporadically into the school curriculum and instructional programme will not do the job. Nor will additive approaches, wherein school curricula remain basically the same, and ethnic content becomes an appendage."*
> (p. 185).

2.4   Multicultural Education as a Challenge to Racism.

One of the major critiques of multicultural education, is that it fails to address key structural forces involved in shaping and sustaining racism. The danger in multicultural approaches to education lies, in that, while having broken with colour racism, discriminatory attitudes may still exist, but with culture as a focal point. It is too easy to interpret problems in multicultural schools as having their roots in cultural differences, rather than in racism. The bottom line is that there still exists a 'them' and 'us' distinction, and a prejudice against 'otherness'. Moore (1994), points out that, under this critique, multicultural education is seen as

> *"too conceptually close to apartheid education for comfort"* (p.239),

and, therefore, destined to leave racist structures unchallenged.

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2.4.1 Multicultural Education as Social Change.

Building a system of education founded on equity and non-discrimination, and the respect for diversity in South Africa, implies major social change. The ideology behind multicultural education is not simply an integration of people who have been left out, but a change of the very fabric of society.

Until now, mastery of the Western culture constituted school success. A shift in our thinking is required in order to maintain and implement the hopes and vision of the new South Africa. Western education models in Africa are seen as having :

> *"qualified the few and disqualified the many."* (p. 31).

(Heugh, Siegruhn, and Pluddemann, cited in Musker, 1995).

If schooling is to meet the needs of all learners, alternatives to traditional schooling are a necessity. In order to provide relevant and meaningful educational opportunities to the diverse peoples of South Africa, the adoption of a holistic approach is favoured, where elements of a typically non-Western worldview are integrated into South African education in a meaningful way. Cultural diversity needs to be codified into the measures we have traditionally used to assess school success. Given the real diversity that exists in multicultural schools, school policies and practices should be addressing how schools can learn to support and respect that diversity rather than suppress and deny it. Schools who want their students to learn values and beliefs for a multicultural society, will need to change the content of what is usually transmitted, to make it congruent with the ideology of multicultural education.

In order for democracy and equal opportunity to be realised, educational discourses must abandon the unequally-constructed power relations that existed under apartheid, and function, instead, towards liberation and empowerment of previously marginalised learners. Monocultural curriculum schools erect very large barriers for 'other' learners. Equal opportunity, implies that **all** learners are given access to an education which enables them to attain the fullest possible development, with no obstacles placed in the way of their development (Verma, 1989) There is both the need and the desire for 'other' groups to

maintain their language and culture. Old discourses need to be questioned, and radically broadened, in order to accommodate other points of view as valid.

There is a need to look critically at educational practices, and adapt them to the new needs of a multicultural, multilingual classroom population. We need a conceptual shift in South African schools, towards the belief that :

> **" a school should mould itself to suit its pupils, rather than the pupil fit into the existing system".** (de Klerk, 1995, p.20).

Fundamental to multicultural education is the acknowledgement of the life experiences of all learners (O'Loughlin, 1992). Learners must be given opportunities to bring their own unique social, cultural and historical experiences to the classroom. Teaching from such a paradigm would empower all learners to rethink their world and their own place in it. Schools should provide the reconstructive space in which learners can sort through their contradictions, conflicts, confirm themselves and gain understanding about the richness of other cultures, thus legitimising all histories brought to the classroom. Diverse viewpoints should be presented. Learners should become comfortable with the fact that there is often more than one perspective, and rather than believing only one version, they should learn to expect and seek out multiple versions.

Multicultural education has the potential to challenge racism in our society. A commitment to fighting racism does not require a simplistic or patronising approach which forces learners into *'cultural boxes'*. Labels such as 'race' imply that differences between races are transhistorical and fixed. This could prevent people from different race groups from recognising what they might have in common. It must be understood that while cultures are often taken for granted as fixed, they are in fact always changing, dynamic, diverse and heterogeneous. The nature of culture in complex societies is complex rather than simplistic. Each society consists of many subsocieties. Goodenough, cited in Sleeter & Grant (1994) explains :

> *"The process of learning a society's culture, is one of learning a number of different or partially different micro-cultures and their sub-cultural variants."*
> (p. 182).

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Such an approach adds a new and important dimension to the understanding of 'race', as it can successfully break down limiting and stereotype assumptions about the 'otherness' of groups (Gillborn, 1995).

2.4.2 Towards a Critical Anti-Racist Pedagogy.

McLaren (1995) argues that a critical task of multicultural education is to construct a critical anti-racist pedagogy - a pedagogy grounded in a politics of ethics, difference and democracy. It is important to maintain diversity, a respect for differences, and the right to participate actively in all aspects of society without having to give up one's own unique identity. A multicultural critical pedagogy attends to the differences between and among people, in an attempt to break down the barriers between learners of different cultures and races, and build understanding, tolerance and appreciation of cultural differences. A critical anti-racist pedagogy has the positive potential and capacity to recognise and accept others as radically different, without the prejudices and stereotypes that often accompany difference.

By 'differences' is not simply meant the variety of diversity of human experience. The attempt to understand the social differences between learners of different cultures involves understanding the effects of the systematic institutionalised mistreatment of one group by another. Differences can be understood in terms of being created by imbalances of political, economic and social power relations within societies, as was the case with apartheid in South Africa (Kohli, 1995). Differences need to be recognised and used, to build an accepting class atmosphere. An attitude of :

'we are all different, but the differences among us are what make us interesting', (p. 17) should be established (Zukowski, 1989).

A politics of difference gives rise to the notion of *'voice'* (Giroux, 1992). A critical approach to teaching in a multicultural setting, ensures that there are multiple 'voices' in the classroom. This critical approach acknowledges plurality as part of a continuous developing of social relations in which all voices with their differences are heard.

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Multicultural education incorporates a radical notion of democracy that is committed to the liberation of all people. A praxis needs to be constructed that seeks to engage history (that is, investigate and understand how the historical patterns of power are involved in the formation of individual subjectivity and identity) with the intent of helping the powerless in their struggle both to transcend and transform the circumstances of their disempowerment. McLaren (1995) and Kohli (1995) explain that a critical multicultural pedagogy involves a commitment to educating people to see their oppression more clearly, and to empower them to move out of and beyond their subjugated positions. Multicultural education in South Africa, needs to construct a critical, liberating pedagogy which offers a way for the marginalised to reclaim their power, and so begin the process of healing the wounds of oppression, and redressing the inequities of the past.

2.5 The Language Issue.

2.5.1 Language, Culture and Discourse Style.

Much literature on multiculturalism draws attention to the fact that cognition is coloured by a individual's worldview and experiences, and how particular cognitive orientations tend to predominate in certain cultures (Barkhuizen, 1995; de Klerk, 1995; Gamaroff, 1987; Goslin, 1987; Langhan, 1989; Lemmer, 1995; McKenzie, 1987; Mulhausler, 1995; Paasche, 1989; Pienaar, 1989; Squelch, 1994; van Ryneveld van der Horst, 1993; Von Gruenewaldt, 1996; Zukowski, 1989). Thus, learners in multicultural classrooms bring with them different culturally-bound assumptions and conventions of what a successful discourse (a way of interpreting and making sense of a situation) should be.

A key factor when considering learners' cognitive orientations, is the tie between language and culture. The connection between language and culture affects every aspect of life, even the perception of truth. Language is inextricably linked and intertwined with a particular culture and discourse style. Therefore, when a language is taught, a whole way of life is taught. Through the medium of English a different system of values is explored.

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When we teach English, we take people from where they are and introduce them to a world which is perhaps very different from the one from which they have come.

The anxiety caused to those who try and communicate across barriers created by cultural and conceptual differences can be enormous. Very often, the most basic concepts either have no equivalent, or if they do, they are filled with a different content. When English is taught or used as the medium of instruction, European values and perceptions (which have been born out of specifically Western situations and historical developments), are superimposed on people who, in their collective consciousness, experience a different reality. Learners who grow up outside the Western thought-world are faced with two realities, differing discourses and ways of interpreting the world. It is often the case that learners from 'other' language and culture groups' understanding of literature and subject matter is affected; they are unable to communicate adequately; and the teacher's ability to help develop the pupils' maximum potential is severely curtailed (Paasche, 1989).

2.5.2 Limited English Proficiency.

The different levels of English proficiency within a class has emerged as one of the most crucial issues in multicultural classrooms, abroad and in South Africa. It is suspected that in South Africa, English language proficiency is a primary component upon which the culture of a school is structured, and is the criteria which is applied for the purposes of differentiation and subsequent labelling, resulting in winners and losers, successes and failures (Dicker, 1996). Limited English Proficiency learners are at an immediate disadvantage. Limited control over the target language causes the L.E.P. learner to have serious distortions in understanding, thus seriously hampering their ability to learn.

"It cannot be assumed that because a learner is able to understand a teacher in class, and can read English with relative ease, that she will understand expository text with equal ease, or be able to express herself clearly in writing".
(Centre for Educational Development, (1993).

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To accomplish these demanding tasks in a language that is not the learner's mother-tongue, requires the mastery of specific and often complex language skills. Cummins, cited in Squelch (1994), has identified two levels of proficiency : basic interpersonal skills (BICS) which take approx. 2 years to acquire; and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) which take 5 to 7 years to achieve. These skills, and this level of language proficiency, especially come into play when a learner has to make sense of written texts, virtually an everyday task. When English is the medium of instruction across the curriculum, L.E.P.learners will clearly experience problems understanding academic content.

2.5.3 Language and Identity.

Language is a part of everyone's identity. If a learner's home language is not recognised or affirmed, their identity is being ignored. de Klerk (1994) explains that prejudice against a language translates as prejudice towards speakers of that language. This has profound effects on pupils' psychological and educational development. Bennett, cited in Sleeter & Grant (1994), explains :

> **"When a student with low self-esteem enters a classroom, self concept becomes** *one of the most challenging individual differences in how she will learn. Because students with a negative self-concept are not fully able to learn, school becomes an arena for failure that prevents them from achieving the success needed for high self-esteem."* (p. 190).

Heugh, Siegrugn, and Pluddemenn, cited in Musker (1995) view monolingualism as a disease which should be eradicated as soon as possible. An education system which supports monolingualism is seen as fraught with deficit models, in which structural inequality is created and sustained through language policy. It is argued that criteria for differentiation and labelling, based on English language proficiency, are responsible for cultures of non-learning in schools.

Multilingualists believe the key to developing cultures of learning in schools and beyond, lies in the implementation of multilingual strategies of education.

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2.5.4 Multilingual education.

Multilingual education proposes the introduction of more than one language of learning across the curriculum. This suggests a more pro-active and affirmative process of involvement for learners with diverse home languages. These processes will enhance learners' general perception of who they are, and not humiliate the speakers of languages other than the dominant. Essential to building mutual respect, understanding and appreciation of one another, is the recognition and affirmation of a learner's home language.

Pro-activists of multilingual education believe it is necessity to develop a new awareness that all languages are powerful and have a literary heritage. There is a growing sense that more importance should be bestowed on African languages. The argument behind this belief is, that unless we are able to accommodate in our public life, at the level of the ordinary South African, his/her language and his/her confidence, we shall not be able to deliver democracy (Musker, 1995).

The Language in Education Policy document (Department of Education, 1997) recognises the cultural diversity of South Africans, and promotes the development of multilingualism. It assumes that the learning of more than one language should be general practice and principle in our society. Legislating a multilingual education policy, which clearly advocates respect for all languages used in the country, is constructed towards the countering of any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism.

The Departments' language-in-education policy, has as its underlying principle the maintenance of learners' home languages while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s).

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.

3.1 Research Questions.

The following were the broad research questions in the study :

- To what extent does the school policy and its ethos reflect a responsiveness to diversity in its learner population ?

- How have learners with limited English proficiency experienced their education at the school ?

- To what extent has the learners' enrolment at the school impacted on social relationships in school and in their communities ?

- What are learners' perceptions on, and experiences of racism and discrimination at the school ?

- What are learners' views on transformation processes at the school ?

3.2 The School.

Mowat Park High is a secondary school for girls, situated in Montclair, Durban. The researcher has been employed, in a full-time capacity, as the Counsellor and Vocational Guidance teacher at the school, since April 1994. Being the Counsellor of the school has enabled the researcher to establish a rapport with the learners over the years at the school. Conducting this study at Mowat Park was an obvious choice, in light of the researcher's familiarity with and access to the school.

Mowat Park was an ordinary state school for whites, until 1992, when it became a Model C school. As there are no longer specific discriminatory criteria for enrolment at the school, the learner population comprises learners of all races and cultural groups. Mowat Park attracts a large percentage of learners from Umlazi and KwaMashu townships.

The school has had to face the challenge of taking its place in a multicultural education system, therefore, making it an obvious choice for this study.

In accordance with the "Model C" model of schooling, Mowat Park is a public school, which has developed a model of school governance in accordance with the South African Schools Act (November 1996). Mowat Park has been officially listed as one of the schools which receives financial assistance only in terms of the basic number of state-paid salaries calculated according to the staffing ratio of 1 staff member to every 35 learners. The school, therefore, carries the full financial burden of all other expenses (including the salaries of additional Governing Body paid staff members) needed to running a successful high school.

While various fund-raising projects account for a small portion of the income needed to run the school effectively, the bulk must come from school fees. Non payment of school fees places a very real financial burden on the school. The school's learner population is made up of lower and middle class socio-economic groups. The school is aware of the fact that there are families in the area who are experiencing genuine financial difficulties, and who cannot afford the current annual fees of R2 400 per learner. (1998).

3.3 Selection of Subjects.

The learners selected to participate in this study were required to reflect on their educational experiences, as learners with limited English proficiency. The population of the study was selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Grade 10 (standard 8) pupils were selected.
- Those learners whose first language was Zulu.
- Those Zulu-speaking pupils who had come directly from a township primary school, to Grade 8 (standard 6) at this English-medium high school, were selected.

Grade 10 learners were selected, rather than Grade 8 or 9 learners, as they would have been at this secondary school for two full years at the time of the commencement of this study. This would mean that the maturity levels of the participants and their improved English proficiency would better afford them the ability to reflect on their experiences at this school. Furthermore, having been at the school for two years would allow the researcher the opportunity to have established a rapport with the participants by the commencement time of the study. (The study began at the beginning of 1998). This would be paramount to the necessary trust, honesty and unselfconscious expression of the participants during the focus group sessions.

Although the term "Limited English Proficiency" might not be an appropriate term for the participants at the time of the study, as their English proficiency had improved from the time they first enrolled at the school, it is still an appropriate term for explaining their English proficiency at the time of their enrollment at Mowat Park.

Learners who had been exposed to primary schools other than those in the townships, before enrolling at Mowat Park, were excluded from the study, as it was presumed that they would have been exposed to the opportunity to improve their English proficiency, especially their CALP skills. Those learners who attended a township primary school were assumed to be at a disadvantage with regard to their English proficiency. Possible obstacles to developing English proficiency and adequate CALP skills in township primary schools include : limited English proficiency on the part of the teachers; unqualified teachers; a focus on structural aspects of language; lack of resources; and, disruptions to the teaching/learning environment. These contributing factors led to the assumption that Zulu-speaking learners from township primary schools are disadvantaged when attending an English-medium secondary school. On enrollment at Mowat Park the participants' CALP levels were very limited.

Zulu-speaking learners who attended township primary schools were selected, as they would pose the greatest challenge to a school's policy and practices involving integration and accommodating diversity. Due to the historical marginalisation of black learners in South

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Africa, and the poor quality of education in the township schools, learners fulfilling the above criteria are presumed to be disadvantaged. It is therefore, this group of learners that educational legislature has in mind, when legislating for the redress of the inequalities of the past.

After identifying those learners who met with the criteria for the study, they were given the choice as to whether they wished to participate in the focus groups. Participation in this study was not made compulsory. Unwillingness on the part of participants to be involved in the focus group research would have been an important limiting factor when assessing the feasibility and validity of the results.

After selecting the participants according to the specific criteria, and eliminating those who did not wish to participate, the sample consisted of 27 participants : none from the A class (as there were no Zulu speaking learners who had come directly from a township primary school to Grade 8 at Mowat Park); six learners from the B class; eight from the C class; six from the D class; and, seven from the E class. The participants selected from each class group made up a focus group, of which there were four.

3.4 Qualitative Research Methodology.

For a situation requiring research data that can be projected to a larger universe, *quantitative* research is the only option available to the researcher. In contrast, *qualitative* research methodology does not rely on measuring but on understanding and describing. The purpose of this study was not to be able to make any projections, but to obtain a 'freeze-frame' or 'still-life' picture on how LEP learners were experiencing high school education at an English-medium school, at this particular point in time. The intentions of the study were to gain insights into how participants feel about, and experience the relatively new system of racially integrated education, that is still in the process of being developed. The research data from this study could be used as part of a development effort, to improve the quality of the educational experiences of LEP learners.

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Therefore, owing to the aims, purposes and intentions of this study, the decision was made to work within the methodological paradigm of *qualitative* research. Qualitative research may involve several different research techniques.

3. 5 Research Methods.

3.5.1 Focus group research.

Focus groups are considered an important qualitative research technique, extremely effective in generating meaningful information about participants' experiences and attitudes toward a variety of different topics (Greenbaum, 1998). Focus group research is employed to obtain basic information from participants about their particular experiences within a given situation. South African education finds itself in the midst of a process of major reform restructuring and development. Focus group research in schools gives insight into the experiences and reactions of the learners in this context. Focus groups are structured to get the participants to talk about problems they are having in particular areas or about the unfulfilled needs they have in certain areas. In this way, specific problem areas can be identified. The value and effectiveness of conducting focus group research not only provides the researcher with a 'lived' account of integrated education in this particular high school, but could identify pitfalls, and be expanded to build a framework for educational reform and improvement in providing quality education for all.

One-on-one interviews with individual participants provide significantly in-depth information about areas of study, but were decided against for this study. Focus group research was considered to be the most effective approach to achieve the research objectives as it had important advantages.

- **The time factor :**

It would have been much more time-consuming gaining inputs from a number of learners individually. Taking the learners out of academic lesson times would not have been allowed, and expecting them to stay after school or give up their lunch breaks was not a viable option. These factors necessitated that the research technique be compatible with working within

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the class situation, fitting in with the timetable. The best option, and least disruptive one, was making use of the learners' Vocational Guidance/ counselling lessons, 40 minutes once a week.

– **English proficiency :**

Although the participants seem to be relatively fluent in English, an exact understanding of remarks and issues raised by the moderator could have been missed, misunderstood or misinterpreted. In such cases, discussion in their home language between participants in the focus group, would serve to clarify meanings, and facilitate understandings of issues raised.

– **Group interaction :**

One of the most important advantages that focus groups have over other research techniques are the benefits obtained from people's interactions within the group, where information is secured as an output of the interactions of several people in a group, as opposed to interviewing people individually. The group dynamics that occur when people interact about a topic stimulate the generation of more information than one might get from individual interviews. Group interaction, therefore, provides a more complete picture of attitudes towards a subject. The focus group research technique requires that group sessions are semi-structured. Broad questions were used as a guide. The researcher probed further based on participants' responses.

Peer interaction, is an essential cultural element of Zulu speaking participants, as African/Zulu learners exhibit a 'communal' orientation towards education and classroom activities. It is a cultural trait that ideas are shared and discussed communally , and a general consensus reached, before a question is answered, or direction is taken in any matter. Therefore, focus group research seemed to be the best choice of research tool, as it is culturally in alignment with the natural manner in which the African/Zulu learners conduct their schooling activities.

The focus group technique holds that the input from any single participant in the group is relatively unimportant. In accordance with this standpoint, the most effective way to evaluate focus groups is to try to identify the issues generally agreed upon within the group, considering the group's general feelings about experiences. Analysis of focus group research,

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then, should focus on the big picture rather than on individual comments, and, it is the responsibility of the moderator to base her conclusions on the overall sense of the participants about the issue or topic under discussion, and not to focus on the atypical comments of individuals (Greenbaum, 1998).

Focus group research has fallen under criticism on this point. Erickson (1986) stresses the importance of a full range range of data, and not merely the central tendencies, issuing a warning against hypertypification as scientifically flawed. The intention of the study is to obtain a fuller, more 'rounded' insight into how LEP learners experience an English-medium high school, rather then 'flat' data. For this reason, this study has tried to refrain from applying the 'analyst's gloss' to the data. Although the moderator identified the overall sense of the groups relative to the idea or issue being discussed, individual inputs were noted and recorded. Attention was focused on the comments of only one or two participants in the group, when it was clear that their view was the consensus view of the entire group. However, the input of individuals (and any contrasting opinion to the dominant one) were seen as adding fullness to the data.

3.5.2 Document Analysis.

School policy documents, the Principal's annual reports, school magazines, and correspondence to parents/guardians, were analysed in order to investigate the school's policy, ethos and attitudes towards it's multicultural learner population. From these documents the school's response to diversity and the school's commitment to anti-racism could also be investigated.

3.6 The Research Process.

3.6.1 Formation of Focus Groups.

A small focus group consists of a discussion, led by a moderator, involving 4 to 6 participants who are selected for the session. The population of a focus group is made up of a reasonably homogeneous group of participants, selected on the basis of various criteria, relating to the needs of the study at hand.

Some researchers prefer to use mini groups instead of larger groups, because they feel they can gain more in-depth information from a smaller group. With a smaller group, there is more opportunity for each participant to participate. It is easier not to contribute in discussion when part of a large group. Thus, theoretically, a smaller group enables the moderator to get more information from each individual participant.

3.6.2 Developing a Discussion Guide.

Developing a formal discussion guide is vital to effective focus group research. Advance preparation is imperative for effective sessions. Sufficient time and attention must be given to the guide to ensure that it is consistent with the objectives of the study.

The discussion guide followed the following pattern :

1. Introduction : a brief explanation of the purposes of the study was given to the focus group participants, and they were alerted to the fact that the moderator would be recording the conversation during the session, by means of note-taking.

2. Ice-breaker or warm-up : a discussion was initiated about the participants' primary school experiences, in the attempt to relax the participants and put them at ease, in case they might have had any build-up of apprehension about the focus group session. Although the 'icebreaker' topic was not one of the areas of investigation planned for the focus group sessions, it was indirectly related and provided some interesting information and comparisons.

3. Key content section : the discussion guide identifies in outline all the points that should be covered in this section of the focus group session. The focus group sessions were semi-structured with broad questions that acted as a guide. (The discussion guide is included in appendix 1).

3.6.3 The role of the moderator.

There is general agreement among those involved in qualitative research that the most important element in the focus group process is the moderator, who sets the tone for the sessions and directs them in such a way that the research objectives are achieved.
The moderator manages the entire research process, which involves preparation (including developing the discussion guide), implementation (conducting the focus group sessions), and analysis.
The researcher in this study served as moderator.

Greenbaum (1998), explains some of the key characteristics of an effective moderator :
— **Superior listening ability** - It is essential that the moderator listen to what the participants are saying, and ensure that the content of the comments is clear. The moderator must be able to remember earlier comments made and correlate them with comments made later.

An effective moderator should be able to process the information that the group is generating and then determine what line of questioning will most effectively generate further information needed to achieve the research objectives.
— **Personable** - The most effective moderators are those who can develop good rapport with participants. Good moderators inject energy and enthusiasm into the group so as to keep participants' energy and interest levels high, and to keep the discussion productive at all times. Good moderators are effective communicators. Communication skills are important to the process of writing the moderator guide, asking questions of the participants during the session.

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– **Neutral** - It is very important that the moderator maintain a completely objective perspective throughout the process so that the findings accurately report the information from the groups. A moderator must avoid being prescriptive; intimidating; putting people on the defensive; challenging or judging the opinions and responses of the participants. Moderators must avoid giving their own opinions and avoid in a subtle manner, giving away their feelings by the tone of their voice, or the expression on their face. Questions should not be posed in such a way as to display a hint of leaning one way or another, and certain answers over and above others should not be prompted.

3.6.4 Conducting the focus group sessions.

The moderator needs to ensure that the room is set up properly. For the purposes of this study, the participants and the moderator were seated around a small square, allowing the moderator visibility of every participant's face. Seated informally around a small table gave the atmosphere of an intimate conversation session, with all participants given equal space.

Although much of the focus group session is conducted with a free attitude on the part of the moderator, the conversation needs to be guided so that it remains within the context of the study. This research technique is more flexible than a formal interview. Although the moderator has a discussion guide, it serves as a guide. Questions are far more open and the participants were given time to talk at length about her experiences and opinions. The wording of questions is not adhered to rigidly, and questions are often reworded and put in other ways, to ensure that all participants understand the issues being raised.

Through the interaction involved in focus group research, both the moderator and the other participants act as facilitators of individual participant's expression of meaning. In order to probe the issues at hand, the moderator follows cues presented by the respondents, trying to illuminate and clarify and expand on what individuals are actually saying and meaning. Through the dialogue or conversation that develops, issues can be clarified and interesting lines of discussion can be followed up.

Greenbaum (1988) argues that focus group research permits researchers to achieve a fuller understanding of incidents and experiences, reactions and opinions, putting them in touch with the 'lived' experiences of the participants.

3.6.5 Problems encountered in the focus groups.

One of the most valuable benefits of focus groups is the dynamics of the discussion that occurs among the participants, and the effectiveness of focus groups depends on this interaction. But some characteristics of interactions can impede the effectiveness of focus group. The most serious problem that arose in the focus groups, and perhaps the biggest concern of critics, is when a few individual participants affect the participation of others.

An opinion leader emerged in some groups who influenced the inputs of the other participants. As a result, the discussion reflected the opinion leader's views more than others'. The more strong-willed participants sometimes tried to intimidate some of the other participants, who subsequently said as little as possible for fear of alienating this learner. In some instances a few participants realised that they did not express themselves as well as others, and withdrew from the discussion for fear of looking stupid.

Interaction among all participants is a vital part of the focus group process and was, therefore, encouraged in order to maximise the quality of the output from the session.

3.6.6 Controlling group dynamics.

During the focus group sessions of this study, it was not uncommon for one participant to assume the role of group leader and try to dominate the session either by talking excessively or by seeking to get the other participants to agree with her own view. This was handled by ignoring the dominant person whenever she talked excessively or continually. The dominant person's opinions were listened to, but not over-indulged. Questions were repeated and issues raised in several different ways and the moderator pointedly omitted calling on the

dominant person for an opinion, asking only for the views of others. After a relatively short while of using this technique, the dominant person always began to function as an effective member of the group. By using this technique, the quieter, less verbal participants realised that their views were also valued and actively sought out.

It was also not uncommon during the focus group sessions, for the quieter, less verbal, and less confident participants to withdraw from interaction. Since the population group consisted of LEP learners, whose English proficiency levels varied amongst themselves, the moderator needed to be aware of participants feeling intimidated and embarrassed by others' higher levels of English proficiency. A similar technique to the one mentioned above was employed. Questions were repeated, sometimes in a different way, and directed at those participants who had not responded. The moderator often addressed the participants using their names, in order to personalise the interaction. It was continuously stressed that findings depended on a variety of responses, that each participant had the freedom and the right to have a 'voice', and that the moderator was interested in each individual response.

CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS.

4.1 Introduction.

In order to realise the aim of the study, it was decided to adopt a twofold investigation into the area of research. The findings of this study will, therefore, be presented under two sections :

(1) School policy,   and ,

(2) The experiences of L.E.P. learners at the school.

School policy was reviewed in order to investigate the school's response to diversity and the school's commitment to anti-racism.

Focus group research was the method of research chosen to investigate how L.E.P. learners are experiencing schooling at Mowat Park.

4.2 School Policy on Diversity.

4.2.1 Introduction.

Mowat Park became a Model C school in 1992, despite opposition from various constituencies. With the enormous and rapid development of high density housing and other land development in the area, the school's pupil numbers have increased considerably. Under the constant threat of drastic staff cut-backs, an increase in the number of learners has been welcomed. The reason for this is that staff numbers can be maintained provided that the school can prove an increase in numbers. On the tenth school day of 1998, the school's pupil enrolment stood at a record of 807. Exact numbers of learners from different race and cultural groups were unavailable, as school records do not specify race. However, from an overall impression of the school population, it can be ascertained that the present ratio of races and cultures in the student population very much reflects that which exists in the broader society.

The staff compliment reflects the school's commitment to multiculturalism, in that it reflects the diversity of South African society. Out of 34 teaching staff (government-paid and governing body-paid), there are three Zulu-speaking staff members, and five Indian staff members.

Although Mowat Park appears to be a racially integrated school, it is not enough to accept on face value that the school is committed to multicultural education, in its radical interpretation towards social reconstruction. A more critical investigation is necessary, to determine the depth of its apparent commitment in this regard.

4.2.2 The School Language Policy.

English Main Language is a compulsory subject at the school, and the medium of instruction for all other academic subjects. Until 1997, the position regarding official languages in the country was that only English and Afrikaans were offered at first and second language level. Zulu was only offered at third language level. From the beginning of 1997 Afrikaans and Zulu were offered at second language level. A Principal's letter to parents and guardians, dated 18 November 1996, explained this position and informed them of changes that were to be implemented :

> *"From the beginning of 1997, all the official languages will be offered at First and Second language level. ... Our new Grade 10's have been required to choose between Afrikaans Second language and Zulu Second language for their three years leading up to the Senior Certificate."*

The above changes were made in accordance with legislation on language policy in education, affirming and promoting the status of languages previously discriminated against. This response to language diversity within the learner population is a sign of the school's commitment to the interests of all its learners.

Currently, Grade 8 and 9 learners take both second languages, Afrikaans and Zulu, as compulsory subjects. Documentation to Grade 8 parents, with regard to this issue, stated

"We are aware that pupils come in with different background knowledge (or lack thereof) in Zulu, but the Zulu teachers help all pupils to adapt."

The school encourages all learners to learn both second languages. Zulu is not simply offered to Zulu-speaking learners. All learners are encouraged to learn Zulu as a second language. This policy depicts the school's commitment to encouraging multilingualism among its learners.

The school has a subject booklet, where all subjects are represented, giving each subject's details and benefits. The following is an extract out of this booklet :

"ISIZULU.

At Mowat Park we are very fortunate. We have pupils from many different language groups, and we are one of the only high schools in KwaZulu-Natal that has offered IsiZulu as an examination subject from Grade 8 to 12. In the past, IsiZulu has only been offered as a seventh subject, on Third language level. It is now possible to take IsiZulu as the official Second language. .... You may ask what the advantages are of taking IsiZulu. As a Zulu speaking pupil, you will be at an advantage, and you will therefore be able to get a good mark. When applying for a job, you will need to have some knowledge of IsiZulu, and if you are not Zulu speaking, you will definitely be able to communicate with everyone around you."

Zulu as a second language is promoted in the above extract, for social reasons as well as for economic reasons.

The Principal's report (Lea, 1994) stated that :

"It is gratifying to see how many pupils of all races have availed themselves of the opportunity of taking Zulu. Mowat Park is one of the few ex NED schools to be teaching Zulu right up to Matric level. This will give our pupils an additional edge when seeking employment in the future." (p.1).

The attitude of non-Zulu speaking pupils towards Zulu is positive. In the 1993 school magazine, a Std 8 English-speaking pupil (Leanne Zietsman, 1993) wrote :

> *"Zulu is fun and we have made new friends and broadened our horizons. We know that it will be an advantage in the future to be able to communicate with all our fellow South Africans."* (p.30)

From the above extracts it can be deduced that the school affords equal status to all languages, while preserving English as the medium of instruction. Its commitment to multilingualism is clear, as it encourages learners to be able to communicate in languages other than their mother-tongue. Previously disadvantaged languages are promoted and encouraged.

4.2.3 Ethos of the School.

The school's motto is **"Knowledge With Understanding."**
The Principal's Report (Lea, 1996) mentioned that the school motto stresses that knowledge needs to go hand in hand with understanding, which includes understanding of others and of self. The main message of this report was :

> *"Have the courage of your convictions, but also remain tolerant of others with differing convictions."* (p.4).

The distinctive spirit and attitude of a school is largely influenced by the Principal. On a number of occasions and in much of the documentation of the school, the Principal has stated that education is not simply the acquiring of knowledge, but is the development of the whole person, with developments of social consciousness and the spiritual aspect being of great importance. The Principal's Report (Lea, 1993) stated that :

> *"We are looking forward to the exciting challenge of being a large and more fully multicultural school where our stress will still be on the importance of the personal development of each individual pupil."* (p.1)

From the analysis of the above documents, it seems that the school's ethos is committed to the tolerance, appreciation, respect and celebration of cultural differences. The ethos of a strong work ethic and a commitment to maintain high academic standards prevails. Honesty, non-violence and integrity are valued.

A realistic view of changes also prevails. The numerous changes have, no doubt, brought with them many problems and responsibilities. They have all been addressed with a positive spirit and attitude, with the belief that these changes would lead to positive growth. The Principal has stated with regard to these changes :

> *"We cannot expect life to be a series of positives. There have naturally been moments of difficulty and tension and numerous problems that have had to be dealt with ... There is no point, however, in dwelling on negative aspects and bewailing our fate. If we meet each one of the negatives, facing them as challenges, we can change many of them into positives. "* (Lea, 1992).

Prior to admission at the school, parents or guardians of learners are required to sign a declaration that they are aware of the ethos of the school, and that they undertake to ensure that their daughter/ward complies with the ethos and the regulations of the school.

4.2.4 School - Parent Relations.

Regular letters to parents/guardians are sent out, informing them of all changes, achievements , circumstances and developments that affects the school and its learners. These letters are sent out in English and Zulu. The school holds Grade 8 and Grade 9 parents' evenings, where parents can discuss their daughters' academic progress, subject choice options and behaviour with the subject and class teachers. In the first term every year, an Open Day is held, where prospective and present parents are given the opportunity to see the school and its facilities. The 1998 Open Day invitation stated :

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"We hope that parents who have not visited us previously will take the opportunity of doing so this year. It is good to know the type of environment your daughter spends so much of her time in and to see the facilities that are available to help her achieve to her full potential." (Mowat Park, 1998).

The following extracts, from a Grade 8 parents' evening notification, and a newsletter, indicate the importance the school places on parental involvement in learners' education:

"If your daughter is to achieve to the best of her ability and gain the most possible during her high school career, the staff and parents/guardians need to work closely together. We do hope that you will all make a special effort to attend and speak to as many of your daughter's teachers as possible." (Mowat Park, 1998).

In the school newsletter, issued in the first term of 1998, this message to parents appeared:

"If we all work positively together for the good of our girls they will achieve and succeed, now and in the future." (Mowat Park, 1998, p.2).

4.2.5 Education of the Whole Person.

A letter from the Principal to the parents, stated that the school :

"offers learners as many opportunities as possible to gain an all-round education of good quality." (Lea, 1998, p.1).

Although a school exists primarily to meet the academic needs of each learner, the school realises that an all-round education is not restricted to the academic aspect. Other aspects of learners' education are developed through the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school, in the endeavour to provide the pupils with every opportunity within the school's talents and means.

All the popular sports are offered at the school, together with a wide range of cultural activities. Pupils are also encouraged to get involved in community service such as Hospice charity collections and volunteer work at orphanages. All learners are encouraged to

participate in physical education and other organised school activities. Sporting and cultural activities reflect the diverse interests of the school's learner population. Gumboot dancing, contemporary African rhythm and dance are popular activities.

A letter from the Principal to parents, stated :

> *"Pupils are encouraged to participate in extra-mural activities as we fully believe in the education of the whole person."* (Lea, 1998, p.1).

The Annual Principal's Report stated that the vision of the school for the future involved the providing of relevant education for all, and that it believed that it is important to offer opportunities to all its pupils to develop their talents. (Lea, 1994).

The school seems committed to continually revising and remodelling its academic programme and its course choices. The school offers a full range of academic, commercial and vocational subjects, in a wide variety of packages. The Annual Principal's Report states:

> *"Mowat Park is able to cater for girls who wish pure academic courses over a range of subjects, cultural, scientific and commercial and also caters for those who want employment straight after school."* (Lea, 1997, p.5).

In the above Annual Principal's Report, it was stated that, while many schools were considering cutting out culturally enriching subjects such as Speech & Drama, and Art, Mowat Park was committed to keeping these subjects in order to cater for the full range of abilities and talents of its learners. (Lea, 1997).

The first term of 1998 newsletter informed readers of the school's introduction of two new out-comes vocational subjects -   Hotel Keeping and Catering, and, Travel and Tourism, both of which have proved very popular. On this issue, the newsletter states :

> *"While conservatives often advise that in a time of crisis one should cut back and be wary of tackling new projects, this is not our policy at Mowat Park. We want your daughters to have what they need to equip them for the work place in the new millennium."* (Mowat Park, 1998, p.2).

4.2.6 Attitude to Policy Change in Education.

An analysis of the Annual Principal's Reports seems to highlight, that, despite opposition to racial integration from various constituencies, the school has been determined in its efforts to respond positively to diversity in the learner population.

The 1994 Annual Principal's Report began thus :

> *"Much has happened in our land and in our school in the past year. Much trepidation was felt about what 1994 would bring, yet, as the elections passed more smoothly than ever expected and a more positive spirit of unity prevailed, so too, has the year been one of positive growth and development at Mowat Park."*
> (Lea, 1994, p.2).

There has been much negative judgement of change from other previously 'white' schools and the local white community. Criticisms centred around the possible drop in standards and the change in the nature of the school, to *"just another black school"*. In light of these issues, the Principal's Report states :

> *"Many question marks hang over the future of education and many rumours appear to be flying around the neighbourhood. I feel that many of these rumours are a slight on my integrity, on that of my staff and of the Governing Body. If people look at what has been achieved and see the progress that is being made, how can they not see how much the good name of Mowat Park means to us, and realise that we are not likely to embark willingly on a course that would lead to a drop in standards! A period of change and transition is not an easy one but this school is living proof that we can make a success of integrated education. "* (Lea, 1994, p.2).

During 1994, a storm and tornado winds wreaked havoc in the Montclair area. This incident was cited in the Principal's Report with a symbolism pertaining to education at that time:

"...we watched our precious fever trees sway and bend as they were lashed and pulled by powerful gusts. We watched horrified as one crashed and we knew that we would have to take down the other. It struck me forcibly that this was symbolic of the time that we are living through. We are watching what has been precious to us buffeted hither and thither and we know that much may be destroyed. ... in the new year ... we will plant two new fever trees. They, like the first ones, will grow. They will undoubtedly have a different shape from the original ones but they, too, will develop into strong and beautiful trees that are a source of pride and admiration. We have treasured our Natal Education Department system and we are loath to see change. Let us have faith, however, that the new system will take root, and grow, and flourish, and in its turn be a source of pride and admiration." (Lea, 1994, p.2).

A message of change and growth seems to prevail. Addressing the 1996 Matrics, the Principal stated :

"You as a group have lived through many changes in the school. Sometimes those changes have made you feel uncomfortable and they have not easily been accepted by all involved. Yet without change there cannot be life and growth ... I leave you with a quotation, something that I saw in a magazine the other day:
'Try to remember that any transition, no matter how unwelcome, offers the chance to grow and develop. Change equals possibility.' " (Lea, 1996).

The 1997 Annual Principal's Report included a quotation which has a message to education:

'Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.'
"So often in times of change people tend to cling to the familiar, not having the courage to launch out into the unknown, yet anyone who has sailed or has experienced sea travel will know the wonderful exhilaration that one feels as the ship sets off and heads out to the open sea." (Lea, 1997, p.5).

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4.2.7 Democratic Structures in the School.

The Representative Council of Learners (RCL) came into being in 1997 in accordance with the South African Schools Act (November, 1996). One learner from each class in the school was elected. The school views the RCL as the *"voice of the school"* as the learners get the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. One of the tasks of the RCL, declared at its inception, was that it would take an active part in formulating the school Code of Conduct. The 1997 school magazine reported that :

> *"this committee has improved communication within the school."*
>
> (Henry, 1997, p.15).

The school endeavours to uphold democracy in its true sense. Nominations are called for the membership of the Governing Body, the Representative Council of Learners, and the Prefect Body. Voting takes place and the decision of the majority is accepted. The two learner bodies, the Prefects and the RCL, carry out important functions within the school and are made up of learners of various cultural groups. It is thus representative of the cultural diversity of the larger learner population.

4.2.8 Conclusion.

From this review of documentation pertaining to the policy and the ethos of the school, it appears that Mowat is indeed committed to the multiculturalism of the new South Africa. Cultural diversity is respected and appreciated, and the changes toward multiculturalism have been embraced willingly as a move towards a better society. The overall ethos of the school remains that the all-round development and education of each individual learner, regardless of diversity, is of utmost importance. Emphasis has been continually placed on maintaining standards and facilities in order that the school may continue to offer a quality education to all its learners. It seems that school policy and ethos at Mowat Park reflect a commitment to racial integration and a positive response to cultural diversity among its learners.

4.3 Experiences of Limited English Proficiency Learners.

4.3.1 Introduction.

This section is a further investigation into the school's response to multiculturalism. Focus group research was undertaken, to gain insight into how learners whose mother-tongue is not English are experiencing schooling at Mowat Park. The insights gained from these group sessions indicate to what extent the vision for quality education for all in South Africa, is a reality for the LEP learners at Mowat Park.

Data is presented according to themes that emerged from the focus group sessions with the target learners.

4.3.2 Access to Quality Education.

The common reason for enrolling at Mowat Park was the learners' and their parents' belief that they would get a better education. It is quite clear that parents and pupils alike believe that township high school education is not as good as the standard of education at Mowat Park. They would have the choice of more subjects, such as typing; more sports options (hockey, squash, soccer, tennis, softball, and swimming, as opposed to only netball for the girls and soccer for the boys in primary school) and better sports facilities; they would improve their English skills; their schooling had less chance of being disrupted by strikes and other disturbances; and it is a girls only school. One learner reported that she really wanted to come to Mowat Park,

> *"just to experience a "white" school - to expand my horizons and meet new people".*

On the whole, it was believed that education is poor in black schools. It was reported that in black schools no work is done after the lunch break. Pupils could leave school or visit friends in other classes to talk. A better work ethic is believed to exist at Mowat Park, where

teachers are not away for up to 2 weeks at a time, and where teachers do not neglect their teaching obligation. The security at black schools is also cause for major concern. One participant, whose mother teaches at a township high school reported that two men came into the school wanting to shoot one of the students in the school.

All the learners in the study stated that they prefer attending an English-medium high school because they want to learn English well. Attending a township high school would mean they

"would miss out on having improved English skills".

Participants reported that students at black high schools who have finished Matric are poor in English, and have generally low levels of confidence.

General consensus among the learners in the study was that they feel their goals have been realised. They have had the opportunity of learning new subjects, especially since Mowat Park has included 'Travel & Tourism' and 'Hotel Keeping & Catering' into the curriculum. There are more facilities, such as, a swimming pool, computers, a good library, vocational guidance and counselling, and videos, which are of benefit to the learners.

Learners report that attending Mowat Park has encouraged them to be "more active", for example, they have gained the courage to participate in sports, and have developed more confidence in voicing their own opinions. All the learners feel that their English has improved a great deal since attending an English-medium school. This was an important goal in coming to an English-medium school, as consensus lay with the importance of being able to speak English well. The main motivation for acquiring English proficiency was that it would afford them better job opportunities and better chances of further study at a University. English is viewed as ;

"a main language",

"a common language",

"a communicating language",

"a universal language",

"spoken in most parts of the world by most people".

Two learners in the study stated that it was not their choice to attend Mowat Park. They were forced to enrol by their parents. They report that their reticence was due to fear of not doing well because they were not used to the English language. These learners now express contentment in attending an English-medium school, and believe that their English has improved.

4.3.3 The Issue of English Proficiency.

4.3.3.1 Introduction.

The issue of different levels of English proficiency within classes in English-medium schools, has emerged as one of the most crucial issues in considering quality education for all in multicultural education in South Africa. This section investigates learners' perceptions and experiences of having limited English proficiency in their first two years at Mowat Park.

4.3.3.2 Early experiences at Mowat Park.

The participants stated that when they first came to Mowat Park in Std 6 or Grade 8, they understood very little of the lessons, due to their limited English proficiency. They report having been quieter and not confident about communicating in English. They were afraid to answer questions, take risks and make mistakes. Therefore, they participated minimally in their first year or so of high school. They report feeling :

"stupid" and

"embarrassed"

at their lack of understanding of English. Other pupils, especially black pupils, in the class would apparently laugh at them when they answered questions incorrectly, or when they told the teachers that they did not understand.

One participant from 10E reflected that her most difficult and painful time in her life was coming to an English-medium high school, and not understanding most of the content of most lessons.

4.3.3.3   Perceptions of Current Proficiency in English.

The participants all report that they are far more comfortable with English as the medium of instruction at present. They apparently feel more confident in their English proficiency, as they can see that they have improved. However, participants from the d and E classes still report feeling stupid and embarrassed when they lack sufficient understanding. Participants from 10D report that they feel anxious about making mistakes in English, because other pupils still make fun at their limited English proficiency. 10C participants say they do not worry about what others think and whether they are laughed at if they do not understand.

The participants in the study believe that although their English has improved radically from their first year at Mowat Park, their English proficiency is not as good as black learners who started at an English-medium school earlier than they did.

> *"When I read their essays, they are so different from mine. They use those difficult words that I don't even understand."*

However, they believe their English proficiency to be better than those pupils who go to former Indian, coloured and African township schools. Comments with regard to this point are :

> *"Our English is better than some black people, older people like our grandparents, and township learners. They understand the language but can't speak it properly, or are scared to speak it, lacking confidence."*
> *"Being in black schools for half our lives, we haven't had the opportunity to communicate with the English culture. Even now at high school, we don't speak and mix very much with other cultures. We stick to our own."*

The participants believe that having started at an English-medium school earlier, preferably from pre-school level, would have improved their English proficiency. At the present time, they believe that not speaking a lot of English socially, hampers their English proficiency. Some believe that having English mother-tongue speaking friends and mixing more would show an improvement in their English proficiency. All the participants in the study believe

that the school should be stricter about enforcing the general speaking of English in all aspects of school life.

4.3.3.4   Attitudes Towards the Mother-Tongue.

Only a few learners seem to display behaviour that indicates that they are forgetting their cultural roots and mother-tongue. The following comment indicates that some learners flaunt their English proficiency as a status symbol :

> *"Some people in Model C schools just think they can speak English only, and some other people don't understand."*

Most participants, however, displayed consensus with regard to the importance of maintaining cultural and linguistic roots. The following comments indicate this :

> *"We try to speak our home language, to show we have not forgotten it."*
> *"Both languages are important. If you don't know your own language we are nothing. And what will happen in generations time? - our language will be wiped out if we forget it."*

> *"It's important to know your mother-tongue- to keep your cultural roots and identity."*

4.3.3.5   Views on Academic Success.

The participants all believe that they are doing well at school, even in the lower ability classes. However, they do not believe that they are doing their best.

> *"We could be doing better"* if :
> *"we worked harder",*
> *"we started to take things more seriously",*
> *"we listened more and paid attention more in lessons",*

"we learned harder",

"we concentrated more instead of talking so much in classes", and

"if the teachers gave us hidings".

The general consensus amongst 10B participants is that they expect more of themselves in a positive sense. They say they believe in themselves and their ability to do better, and this self-confidence gives them the courage to strive to do better. They enjoy teachers who try to keep their concentration and attention by making their lessons fun.

The majority of 10C participants report that they enjoy teachers who are strict, as there is no room for

"fooling around"

and losing concentration in their lessons. They also report enjoying teachers who teach learners as if they are intelligent and *can* understand. They report not enjoying teachers who teach slowly, who pick on pupils, and do not explain much. Participants from 10C, in general, believe that self-discipline, extra lessons and good teaching methods would help them improve their grades now.

The participants from 10E generally believe that they would be getting better grades and results at this stage of their high schooling, if their English proficiency in Std 6 / Grade 8 was better, and if they had been more determined in bettering their English skills. They report that although they were enthusiastic to attend an English-medium high school, their limited understanding of English caused them to lose interest in the lessons and activities.

4.3.4 Two Cultural Realities.

4.3.4.1   Introduction.

A reality in contemporary South African society and in educational institutions is the difficulty of integrating people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Literature on multicultural education in South Africa, as elaborated on in Chapter 2, points out that

through the medium of English a different system of values is explored and, to some extent, internalised. LEP. learners at Mowat Park, are therefore, faced with 'two realities': one at school and one at home. This section investigates the extent of the emotional pressure and stress of living in and between two different ways of life. It is conceded that this is likely to be the experience of most Black learners at this school, and that it is not particular to LEP learners. However, it was decided to explore the issue with the target group in this study.

4.3.4.2   Township Life and Suburban Life.

Seven out of the twenty eight participants taking part in this study have moved out of the Umlazi and KwaMashu townships. The majority (twenty one out of twenty eight) still live in the townships. Those learners who have moved out of the townships, report that life in the suburbs near the high school is boring. They say that everything is so quiet in the suburbs, in comparison to the vibrancy and noise of township life, where neighbours apparently fight frequently and loudly, and loud music is acceptable. Social relationships between neighbours in the suburbs are reported to be vastly different from those in the townships. People are more insular and far less social and interactive in the suburbs :

"They don't talk to each other much, and guard their individual space."

Life in the townships is reported to have a large family atmosphere about it, where everybody knows everyone else well, and has some part of everyone else's life. There is much interaction between neighbours, from borrowing salt, to supporting a family that has had a death.

4.3.4.3   Conflicting Norms and Values.

The life-styles of English-speaking pupils and Zulu-speaking pupils are perceived as very different, with regard to boyfriends.

"Some of the Zulu parents raise us in a different way from the white people - we're not allowed to have boyfriends, and some parents don't allow us to go out with friends."

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White learners are perceived as being allowed to have boyfriends at a young age, and to go to night clubs. Black learners perceive white parents as more trusting of their daughters, whereas black parents are very strict about boyfriends and dating. Most of the learners in the study report that they are envious about the freedom white learners have, and the leniency of white parents with their daughters. This difference is reported to sometimes cause friction and arguments in the black learners' homes. The participants say they try not to make direct comparisons with white learners when talking to their parents, as they are from a totally different culture. But they do sometimes :

"just talk and try to make parents understand."

Twenty five out of the twenty eight learners in the study believed that "white" schools teach black girls a different way of life. Five participants report that a "white" school teaches them how they should carry themselves and how they should behave in public.

"Some of the girls in black schools don't behave like ladies."

In Mowat Park, participants say they are encouraged to voice their opinions more freely. Because of this, they believe they are more confident about what they believe and think about things, forming their own opinions, and expressing themselves.

"Mowat Park encourages us to think for ourselves and not be spoon-fed by the teachers."

"Some teachers teach us to be free thinking."

One participant reported that her mother said:

"My daughter might know some things that I don't, because she's getting a better education than me."

Another participant reported that :

"Our parents can see the difference in us and the other black girls around the township. They are always falling pregnant and we don't, because we are taught in lessons like V.G. about how to protect ourselves and the difference between right and wrong. These girls don't get taught all this."

It was reported that not all families support the learners' own opinions and new-found self-confidence. For most of the participants, communication about boyfriends and sexuality in the home, is a taboo subject until they are 21 years of age. Two out of twenty eight participants have parents who are open and approachable about these topics.

These are some of the comments made with regard to conflicting norms and values :

> *"Times are changing and things are happening fast. Black families in general are not prepared to change."*
>
> *"We don't want to lose our roots, our own language, who we are, but things are changing and we want to become more European and more civilised."*
>
> *"I don't want to be left behind."*

4.3.4.4   Attitudes of Township Community.

Although the parents and the immediate family of the learners seem to encourage them to speak English for social purposes, participants report that most neighbours in the townships do not like speaking English :

> *"There are those who always think you're stupid when you're speaking English."*

Learners report that township neighbours think differently about them now that they are enrolled at Mowat Park.
The following comments indicate this :

> *"Some of them treat us girls as if we have something special."*
>
> *"I don't mean I'm undermining them, but some pupils at black schools think because we can speak English straight out, that we are higher then them."*

Learners report that township neighbours seem to resent seeing these pupils :

> *"trying to better ourselves".*

Some comments from the participants on this point are :

"They think you think you're better than others".

"They say we think too much of ourselves."

"They say we think we can have more freedom."

"Some think you're rich and wealthy and you think you're better than them."

Jealousy and envy seem to be the predominant reasons given for the discrimination these learners experience from township neighbours :

"Township people are very jealous because their children go to black schools. The black schools are cheaper than Mowat Park. We have nicer uniforms, we can do hair styles and we are getting a better education. We've got more chances than them, like Speech & Drama, Hotel Keeping & Catering and Travel & Tourism, and better chances of university entrance."

Learners report that they are frequently mocked and ridiculed by people in the township neighbourhoods because they attend an ex-Model C school.. Participants report feeling rejected by others who go to township schools, and being unfairly discriminated against. Some comments about this point are :

"Some try to make us feel bad and say it's no use coming to the white schools because we are failing and wasting our parents' money."

"They notice every little thing you do and interpret it badly. They want to find fault with us."

Some comments indicate that neighbours are fearful that these learners will change and forget their culture :

"They say we don't want to slaughter cows and goats, we just want to eat pizza and things like that."

Most learners in the study perceived themselves as being different from, and being better than their township neighbours. Some comments with regard to this point are :

> *"We now feel different from our neighbourhood. But this doesn't worry us because we feel proud of ourselves."*
>
> *"We are special, we're one of the high classes."*
>
> *"We're different from them : when we go to school we catch a bus and they have to walk."*

Some participants did not think that attending an ex-Model C school should make any difference with relationships in their communities :

> *"We don't think we're better or higher than them. We are the same. We've just got better chances."*

The majority of the participants living in the townships, reported not feeling an intricate part of their neighbourhood :

> *"I don't feel part of my neighbourhood. They mock me and call me a Model C."*

4.3.5 Perceptions on Issues of Difference and Racism.

Integrating diverse racial and ethnic groups in muticultural schools, will undoubtedly bring racial tensions and prejudices to the fore. These could have detrimental effects on LEP. learners emotionally, and educationally. The study explored learners perceptions on difference and racism, and their experience of racism at the school.

While some girls see English-speaking and Zulu-speaking learners as :

> *"very different. They don't slaughter goats or cows. They don't believe in ancestors like the Zulu people do";* the majority of participants believe :
>
> *"They are not very different. The only difference is the language and way of life."*
>
> *"They're different, only in terms of traditions and culture."*
>
> *"The only difference is the colour of the skin".*

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Some participants perceived Mowat Park to be a 'white' school. These are some of the comments with regard to this issue :

> *"We still think about this as a 'white' school in a way".*
>
> *"It's thought of as a 'white' school sometimes because it's an English-medium school".*
>
> *"It's a 'white' school because the principal is white, almost all the teachers are white, and it's always been a white school from before."*
>
> *"It's not a 'white' school anymore. It's multiracial, and there are more black girls than white girls".*
>
> *"It's an Indian and black school, now."*

Responses to experiences of racism and discrimination in the school were varied. While it emerged during the focus groups, that some participants had no experience of racism or discrimination in the school, other participants had such experiences. The general consensus among those learners who had no direct experiences of racism or discrimination held the belief that Mowat Park practices tolerance towards pupils of different cultures. Some of their comments are :

> *"Different cultures are treated the same."*
>
> *"I don't think there's a problem at Mowat Park with different cultural traditions."*
>
> *"It's good that we have black and Indian and coloured teachers. It shows that the school is not racist."*

In keeping with this viewpoint, one of the participants gave the example that although the school has a Christian ethic, there is no discrimination or *"putting down"* of other religions.

One participant recounted an incident of a learner who was wearing an "Isiphandla", a traditional goat's skin bangle. A teacher apparently asked the pupil to take it off as it was not part of the school uniform. But the headmistress intervened and explained the meaning of the bangle to the teacher, and the teacher apologised to the pupil.

Some teachers are seen as racist and discriminatory towards the Zulu-speaking learners.

These are some comments pertaining to this issue :

> *"Some teachers treat us differently. They don't understand us."*

> *"There are still teachers here who are racist. They make you feel like you shouldn't be here because it's a 'white' school".*

> *"Some of the teachers treat us differently. When black girls are making a noise they like to scold you, but when the white girls make noise they don't do anything."*

> *"Sometimes when we do things wrong, these teachers say 'if we don't want to obey the school's rules, we must go back to where we came from'. We know they mean we must go back to the black schools."*

> *"We have felt unwanted, and left out. At first, I used to be hurt, but now I don't care, as long as I get my education. I don't care what a person says to me."*

Even though learners may experience racism and discrimination, they report that not all the teachers at the school are racist :

> *"Some teachers have the attitude - 'There are no black and no white people, only people' - and then others see people racially."*

The following are comments pertaining to perceived racism among the learner body :

> *"Some Indians and white pupils pretend to be friendly, but we feel like we're interrupting."*

> *"Some Grade 11 and 12 white girls don't like us black girls. But the younger girls are OK. I think they are more used to mixing with black girls."*

> *"There are some black girls in the school who are racist. It's not only white racism."*

The following comments came out of the discussion on the possible reasons for existing racism:

> *"There would always be racism because some people don't believe in changing."*

> *"Some people might have experienced bad times and now they find it difficult to forgive."*

4.3.6 Views on Future Transformation at the School.

4.3.6.1   Introduction.

It was hoped, that allowing this area of discussion in the focus groups, would give more opportunity for the participants to interact with issues already discussed. As it was hoped, this section provided in-depth information on the expectations and needs of LEP. learners at the school. While some participants stated that there was no need for further reform at the school, as they believed it to be :

"fine the way it is now,"

there were some interesting suggestions for reform made by other participants.
The following sections explore these.

4.3.6.2   English as the Medium of Instruction.

Strong consensus lay with the belief that English should remain as the language of instruction:

"We came here to learn English. We want it as a first language."

Every participant was adamant that they did not want to learn their subjects through the medium of Zulu :

"We don't want Zulu as a first language here at school. Zulu as a first language is very difficult. My Zulu is bad. The Zulu we speak at home is not pure like in the ancient times. We add in words of our own, some English and some Afrikaans words. If we did Zulu first language at school here it would be very hard, and I wouldn't get good marks for it. We learn grade 3 or 4 Zulu at this high school. It's very easy. First language Zulu is much more difficult. Reading and writing in Zulu is difficult. We are happy that it is a second language here."

Consensus amongst the participants rested with the need to speak more English :

> *"We should speak more English at school. Some girls think we think too much of ourselves when we speak English, so they say bad things to us, things that make us feel bad, so we speak Zulu so it doesn't hurt us. They think we are neglecting our own language. There are some girls who think they are better and speak English all the time. But I just want to learn English better."*

> *"We should all be forced to speak only English, which is South Africa's main language, so we would all benefit - our English would improve."*

> *"Zulu must not be spoken at school at all. Detention must be given to girls who are speaking Zulu. We want to speak English."*

4.3.6.3   Racial Diversity.

Another area of strong consensus was that no more Zulu-speaking learners should be enrolled at the school. These are some of the comments about this point :

> *"There are too many black children. People are calling the school Umlazi High because there are so many black girls here. The school must stop taking so many black girls."*

> *"If there were more black and Indian pupils, bye-bye Mowat, The school would change. The rules would change. The girls would just do their own thing."*

> *"There should be more white pupils, otherwise we'll become another black school. We just came from a black school."*

The belief that no more Zulu-speaking teachers should be appointed emerged strongly. Their greatest concern regarding this issue was that Zulu teachers would hinder their learning of English. The following are some comments pertaining to racial diversity amongst the staff:

> *"We don't want anymore black teachers. It's OK that there are black teachers teaching Zulu, but we don't want black teachers teaching other subjects, because they are not English. We come here to learn English."*

> *"For example in Biology, a black teacher would beat around the bush if we had to learn sensitive, maybe embarrassing things. But white teachers are straight*

about these things. They address these embarrassing things head on."

"It's not that Zulu and English teachers teach differently. But if a black teacher teaches a subject, we will end up speaking Zulu when we don't understand. She will resort to explaining in Zulu."

"We're not saying they don't know how to speak English. They do. But sometimes they get stuck when they have to explain something difficult. Then they explain in Zulu, and then we have a problem because we've got to write this thing in exams."

"Sometimes black teachers might take advantage of the fact that we, and they, are African, and they might treat us the way teachers do at black schools - when they are very angry, they swear at us and say anything they want to us."

4.3.6.4   Accommodating Diversity.

Some participants felt strongly that the school needed to exercise more understanding and acceptance of the Zulu culture, and accommodate the Zulu cultural ways more. These are some comments with regard to this standpoint :

"Black people act differently in performances. For example, they clap and shout out during a performance, as a sign of appreciation. But the school expects us to sit quietly throughout performances and clap only at the end."

"It's not fair. The school should consider both our cultures and not just one. They should mix a bit of both cultures, and not just take all of the one culture."

On the other hand, some participants felt that it was the responsibility of the Zulu-speaking learners to change and respect the school more. The following comments illustrate this point:

"We need to change ourselves before changing anything or anyone else".

"We black people have to change our attitudes. Some of us want everything our own way, and we are ruining things. Like the Funday, and goofy games, and Miss Mowat competition - these are banned now because we black people like to have funky things, and we don't respect others peoples' kinds of fun."

Others took the middle road, seeing both standpoints. These were their comments :

> *"We need to compromise. It mustn't all be white fun and music. But we black people can't have it all our way. We must both be tolerant. 50/50."*

4.3.6.5   Intercultural Communication.

There seemed to be a strong consensus within all the focus groups about the need for more communication between the different cultural groups in the school. These are some of the comments made regarding this need :

> *"People of the same language and culture tend to stick together - they always sit together and talk about the same things - we isolate each other."*
>
> *"It would be better if we could understand each other's cultures more, by mixing up more."*
>
> *"Most black girls want to mix up and get to know other cultures. It's the few that think you need to keep your cultures and your roots, and not mix."*
>
> *"Everybody (all cultures) has an isolation attitude. I believe peoples' attitudes should be changed, so we'll be friendlier to each other, sit together and become friends."*
>
> *"There would be no racism because we would understand each other."*

CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION.

5.1 Introduction.

This section will discuss the findings of the study, within the framework of debates in the area of multicultural education. Important issues emerged from the investigation into the school's response to diversity, and the particular experiences of the L.E.P. learners who participated in the focus groups. These will form the basis of this discussion.

5.2 School's Response to Diversity.

Despite much negative judgement from other previously 'white' schools and from the local white community, Mowat Park secondary seems to have been determined in its efforts towards multiculturalism. The present ratio of races and cultures in the learner population very much reflects that which exists in the broader society. The staff compliment also reflects the cultural diversity of South African society.

The school ethos reflects a tolerance of and respect for diversity. In keeping with the school ethos, some participants reflected that Mowat Park practices tolerance towards different religious and cultural practices among its diverse population of learners. However, the teaching practices of *all* the teachers do not reflect tolerance of and respect for diversity. Participants reflected that they experienced some teachers as racist and discriminatory towards learners of different cultural groups. Some participants reflected that they felt excluded and unwelcome at times in the school.

In spite of the school ethos including a tolerance and respect of other cultures, the dominant school culture still prevails. L.E.P. learners are expected to display the behavioural style of the dominant culture. This practice perpetuates the view that the dominant culture of the school is the only correct culture which all other cultures should aspire to. Although elements of the Zulu culture have been integrated into the school curriculum, some

participants felt strongly that the school needs to exercise more understanding and acceptance of the Zulu culture, and do more to affirm the Zulu culture. There is evidence that at Mowat Park, an assimilationist policy prevails.

The school claims to be making a success of integrated education. However, school practices are not *all* compatible with the vision for multicultural education. The main component of multicultural, integrated education is equal opportunity to all learners. If the school's practices are not acknowledging and affirming the cultural realities of L.E.P. learners, then they cannot be seen as constituting equal opportunity for these learners. Expecting L.E.P. learners to be assimilated into the dominant culture of the school, is operating out of the belief that deficits lie with the L.E.P. learners. This serves to maintain an imbalance of power relations between the dominant culture and 'other' cultures. This is in direct contrast to the vision of multicultural, integrated education, which is one of working towards social change, through the redressing of imbalances and inequities.

5.3 Linguistic Diversity in Multicultural Classes.

5.3.1 Impact of L.E.P. on Academic Success.

Learning breakdown is a complex issue. Barriers to learning and development can be located within the learners, within the school itself, within the education system, and within the broader social, economic and political context. Although Nieto (1996) disputes the belief that a lack of English skills *alone* causes poor academic achievement among learners, deficient language proficiency poses one of the greatest academic problems. Although participants were generally proficient in spoken English and appeared to understand the spoken word fairly well, this does not necessarily mean that they are able to understand expository texts or highly academic material with equal ease, or that they are able to express themselves clearly in writing. While believing that they are doing well at school, participants still acknowledged that there were areas where they experienced a lack of understanding.

Participants reflected that their limited understanding of English during their first year at Mowat Park, made them feel inadequate and incompetent. This lack of confidence in themselves and their English proficiency led to minimal participation and withdrawal from the learning process. If a pattern of minimal participation, withdrawal and passivity towards learning is established, a culture of non-learning can take root. If, as Dicker (1996) suspects, English language proficiency is a primary component around which the culture of the school is structured, and the criteria which is applied for school success, then L.E.P. learners at Mowat Park are at an immediate disadvantage.

It is essential for learners to experience feelings of self-worth and significance in order to develop a sense of personal value. The failure to develop a sense of competence could leave learners with a continuing sense of inadequacy. It is an accepted fact that learners who are confident in themselves have a greater chance of scholastic success. Learners with low self-esteem run the risk of learning breakdown.

Participants in this study were drawn from the B class to the E class. All participants in the study met the selection requirements. Therefore all participants could be classified as Limited English Proficient. The classes are grouped according to ability. It follows, then, that participants in the lower stream classes achieve more poorly than those in the higher stream classes. This supports Nieto's (1996) belief that limited English proficiency is not the only explanation for poor academic achievement. However, given the negative effects that limited English proficiency has on learners' self-esteem, it can safely be assumed that L.E.P. learners are 'at risk' of poor academic achievement. Feelings of inadequacy and incompetence can have profound effects on learners' psychological and educational development.

In addition, according to Squelch (1994), learners whose cultural background is different from the dominant culture of the school, may have less chance of experiencing academic success. Nieto (1996) agrees that cultural incompatibilities between learners' home realities and schooling realities can explain poor academic achievement in schools. Cultural differences, therefore, function as a risk factor, given other mediating factors. The more that

learners' home cultures differ from the culture of the school, the more 'at risk' learners are of school failure and poor academic achievement.

The school has committed itself to offer its learners as many opportunities as possible to gain a good quality education, and to provide learners with every opportunity within the school's means to encourage their all-round development and growth. In keeping with the aims of the school, Mowat Park needs to introduce innovative practices towards ensuring that L.E.P. learners are not at risk of poor academic achievement and negative self-esteem.

Teaching practices need to be redefined. Many educational theorists argue for the necessity of developing critical pedagogies in schools, that give all learners the right to equal participation in the teaching/learning process (Deacon, 1996; Gillborn, 1995; Giroux, 1992; Kohli, 1995; Mclaren, 1995). A critical multicultural pedagogy would attend to the differences among learners, and involves a commitment to empowering learners to move out of and beyond their marginalised positions. For example, texts might be recreated in ways that would include all learners cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Muthukrishna, 1995).

5.3.2 Multilingualism.

The school's language policy shows a commitment to the language interests of all its learners, and to affirming and promoting Zulu as a second language. All learners have the opportunity to learn two languages other than their home language . The school policy upholds the importance to being able to communicate with other cultural and language groups.

Current prescribed principles in language policy make provisions for the removal of linguistic and racial discrimination in education. Mowat Park's language policy is in keeping with provisions of current language policy. The status and commitment given to Zulu in the curriculum, upholds the :

> *'development of a national, democratic culture of respect for the country's diverse language communities.'*

(The South African Schools Act of November, 1996, Section 6:18).

By being one of the first Model-C schools to introduce Zulu, and being consistent in its commitment to raising the standard and the status of the language in the curriculum, Mowat Park has taken :

> *'special measures ... to promote the status and use of official languages which have previously been neglected or discriminated against.'*

(The South African Schools Act, 1996, Section 6 : 18).

The Department of National Education, in its 'Language in Education Policy', is committed to promoting multilingualism, and assumes that the learning of more than one language should be general practice and principle in all schools (Department of Education, July, 1997). This policy document recommends that additive bilingual models should become a central feature of education policy. Such models would recognise learners' home languages as powerful tools for cognitive development and a rich resource in the learning of a second language. The link between language and identity gives further motivation for maintaining of L.E.P. learners' mother-tongue throughout their schooling.

Although the inclusion of single medium schools as an option in the Constitution has been seen by some to contradict the nature and recognition of South Africa as a multilingual society, it is believed that the definition of multilingualism can be, and in fact should be, extended to include the possibility of single-medium schools, provided that those schools promote multilingualism (Ogle, 1996) :

> *"In spite of our support for the policy of multilingualism, we still feel that English has hegemony ... we see multilingualism as a device or strategy that can be used quite effectively in schools where English is the medium of instruction."*

Schools are constantly faced with the reality of which languages the institution has the capacity to offer. Given Mowat Park's specific staffing constraints, English will remain the only medium of instruction and the compulsory first language for all learners, with Zulu and

Afrikaans being offered as second languages. As adopting two languages of learning and instruction would be an extremely challenging task, Zulu cannot be offered as a medium of instruction at present.

Mowat Park is attempting to move towards multilingualism. It has shown its commitment to promoting and upgrading the status of Zulu as a second language. However, there are areas for further improvement. Although Mowat Park's language policy seems to acknowledge and affirm the use of Zulu, the Zulu culture is neglected and downplayed, and the dominant culture of the school is preserved. The school would do well to include the bicultural aspect of bilingual education. Bilingual/bicultural education is based on the premise that the language and culture learners bring to school are assets that must be acknowledged and affirmed in their education (Nieto, 1996). The school needs to put more emphasis on L.E.P. learners' home culture, within all aspects of the curriculum.

Adopting a two-way bilingual education model, or aspects thereof, might also be an option for Mowat Park. Nieto (1996) describes such a program model for integrating English-speaking learners and non-English speaking learners, the goal of which is to develop bilingual proficiency, academic achievement, and positive cross-cultural attitudes among all learners. This may be a possible response towards breaking down historical cultural barriers between learners, and encouraging social integration. Nieto (1996) stresses some of the principles that need to underlie such a model. The programme has to address the fundamental issues of discrimination and stratification in schools and society.

A critical element is not the language issue, but rather the extent to which teachers and schools attempt to address the alienation and marginalisation from the curriculum and culture of the school that learners experience. The author argues that an attempt has to be made to

"reverse institutionalised racism of society as a whole." (p. 199).

Cummins (1989) explains that unless bilingual programmes become anti-racist, change will be superficial and will perpetuate discriminatory educational practices.

Nieto (1996) makes various important points regarding pedagogy in bilingual programmes. She explains that effective instruction does not merely mean teaching subject areas in another language, but

> *"instead, finding ways to use the language, culture and experiences of the students meaningfully."* (p. 199).

The need is for a more empowering environment for learners where they feel that it is safe to take risks and participate fully in the curriculum.

5.4 Countering Racism and Discrimination Through the Curriculum.

Negative and harmful attitudes towards 'difference' in our society remain a critical barrier to learning and development. Although the school is multiracial, discriminatory attitudes still exist. According to the participants in the study, some teachers and learners obviously do not welcome the integration of 'other' cultures into the school, and respond negatively to integration. There still exists, among some of the staff and learners, a prejudice against 'otherness'.

It is perhaps too idealistic to expect no manifestations of racial prejudice in any multicultural institution, especially in light of South Africa's history of engrained racism. Nevertheless, it remains the school's responsibility to challenge racism and discrimination. There is no anti-racist policy currently in operation at Mowat Park. If racist attitudes are not actively challenged, the school will fall short of realising the goal of multicultural education, which is to redress South Africa's history of imbalances in power relations. The school needs to establish an anti-racist policy in the attempt of redressing the years of forced segregation and apartheid. The school curriculum should be including measures which attempt to build mutual understanding of other cultural realities, towards the end of true integration and social change

(Brandt, 1986; Gillborn, 1995; Kohli, 1995; McLaren, 1993).

Learners from diverse cultural backgrounds do not necessarily perceive the same worlds, and may communicate and understand different perceptions of reality. Where there are dissimilarities in perceptions, the stage is set for confusion and conflict. Unidentified or ignored cultural conflicts can impede learning. Differences need to be recognised and used, to build accepting learning atmospheres.

This can be done by raising consciousness among learners, of the immense divergence in the ways in which the world is perceived and interpreted. Classrooms could become intercultural spheres where respect and appreciation for all cultures is encouraged. Understanding another's cultural heritage helps break down cultural prejudices, misunderstandings and conflicts, providing more meaningful learning experiences for all involved. O'Loughlin (1992) suggests that the school curriculum should be making provision for learners to sort through their contradictions, confirm themselves and gain understanding about the richness of other cultures. Learners should be encouraged to realise and explore other perspectives and world views.

5.5 Cultural Discontinuities in Schooling Experiences.

Attending an English-medium school does not only involve being exposed to a new language, but being exposed to a whole different way of life. L.E.P. learners who grow up outside the Western thought-world are faced with two realities. The anxiety caused to those who try and communicate across barriers created by conceptual and cultural differences can be enormous.

One participant in the study reflected on her first year at Mowat Park as being the most painful and difficult time in her life.

Participants seem to want to embrace this new reality, but simultaneously hold on to their cultural and linguistic roots. It is inevitable that L.E.P. learners will take on elements of the Eurocentric, Western culture, which is the dominant culture of the school, and in this process, elements of their indigenous, authentic culture will be lost. These learners could

easily find themselves in an alienating, intermediate space, torn between cultural discontinuities that exist between the home and the school cultures. The focus groups revealed that participants sometimes experience a large degree of emotional pressure and stress from living in and between these two realities.

Nieto (1996) explains that learners experiencing these discontinuities may feel that they have to choose between the two realities, and then have to face the consequences of their choosing one over the other. When schools and homes have radically different values and practices, learners could experience alienation from their cultural and family's reality. Participants report being encouraged to voice their own opinions more freely at school, but not all families support these values and practices. This would inevitably cause conflict and pressure for these learners. The result of cultural discontinuities between learners' home lives and school lives may result in learners' rejection of the family's views on appropriate behaviour. In such cases, serious intergenerational conflict could develop. The emotional pressure and tensions within this space of split existence and identity, cannot be underplayed.

Although the school curriculum has made the attempt to integrate elements of cultural worldviews other than the dominant culture of the school, the partcipants still state that they would appreciate seeing their cultures acknowledged and affirmed more. The measures Mowat Park has taken could be what has been criticised as token representation of diverse cultures. Gay, cited in Sleeter & Grant (1994) argues that a curriculum can incorporate element of other cultures, without changing the core curriculum or the dominant culture of the school.

Although the school policy reflects an acceptance without discrimination of other cultures, a dominant culture still prevails. The status quo could go unchallenged, as there is evidence that L.E.P. learners seem to want to embrace Western cultural values and practices, in the belief that they will be better equipping themselves for academic, economic and social success. Some of the learners reflected that they still see 'white culture' as the dominant culture, to which they have to aspire. It is of great concern that some of the black learners

are devaluing their own cultural norms and values. Assimilationist school policies devalue and disregard 'other' cultural realities to some extent, while attempting to replace them with the dominant culture of the school. The degree of deculturation that L.E.P. learners often undergo, inevitably causes some degree of conflict and confusion.

The Eurocentric, Western model has undoubtedly dominated the world through Colonialism. It has imposed its culture on authentic, indigenous cultures the world over. This has had a marginalising effect on most indigenous peoples. There is a current movement to reclaiming identities that have been destroyed or distorted, and reinstating the 'voice' of authentic, indigenous cultures (Spivak, 1990; Mbembe,1992; During, cited in Milner, Thompson & Worth, 1990). The school has the responsibility to respond to the diversity of cultural realities among its learner population, by affirming other cultural realities, instead of affirming only the dominant culture.

An important key in multicultural education, lies in not evaluating learners' differences in terms of superior and inferior, appropriate or inappropriate. Difference should not necessarily mean deficit. The attitude that differing discourse styles are relative and comparative, rather than absolutely right or wrong, should be developed within the school.

Studies have found that 'other' cultures will assimilate into the dominant culture to some extent, but many continue to retain unique cultural characteristics (Noels, Pon & Clement, 1996). These findings have been supported in this study. To better respond to diversity of its learners, the school needs to acknowledge and affirm cultural differences within all aspects of the curriculum. Furthermore, the school needs to find ways to help learners understand and cope better when confronted with discontinuities between the two cultural realities.

5.6 The Issue of 'Quality Education'.

The quality of education in semi-private schools is undoubtedly their main attraction. Education at Mowat Park, is believed to be of a better quality that at township high schools. Participants were clear that they enrolled in this school because they wanted to benefit from the higher quality of education, the stable learning environment and the better opportunities that the school offered.

There is evidence from this study that L.E.P. learners have gained and benefitted from their schooling at Mowat Park. The findings reveal that Mowat Park offers learners a strong work ethic, wide choices in subjects and sports, exposure to English, and encouragement to participate in activiites and formulate their own opinions. From this perspective, Mowat Park can be seen as offering a quality education.

Participants in the study expressed concern with regard to Mowat Park being inundated with black learners, and becoming *'just another township high school'*. Many of them believed that there were already too many black learners in Mowat Park, and expressed their belief that the school should not be taking in anymore. The participants wanted the school and the staff to remain predominantly white, under the misconception that the race of the learners and staff is the determining factor of whether Mowat Park offers a quality education or not. This kind of thinking has its roots in the apartheid era of white dominance. Learners fail to see that social class is an important mediating factor. The quality of education in the semi-private schools in South Africa is determined by a number of factors, the most important being the socio-economic background of learners and parents. (Research in numerous countries has found that educational performance consistently correlates with socio-economic background and parents' education, more so than with any other factor, including race (Bot, 1990)).

The higher fees which learners are required to pay at Mowat Park is a large determining factor in ensuring education of a better quality than the historically Black schools. This model of school funding is encouraged by the present government, in which communities take more responsibility for contributing to the education of their children (The South African Schools Act, 1996). Non-payment of fees will impact negatively on the quality of education at Mowat Park. There is a current problem with widespread non-payment of fees at the school. If this 'culture of non-payment' prevails, it is likely that the school may not be able to offer the quality of education currently available to learners, in particular, smaller teacher-learner ratio, wide subject choice, varied sporting and cultural activities, and updated modern resources and facilities. In essence, this was the concern of learners who participated in this study.

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION.

The advent of a new multicultural educational system, naturally presents new challenges and responsibilities to schools. However, there are no clear-cut solutions to many of the problems inherent in multicultural schooling. It is a complex and multifaceted area of investigation, which must be understood as such, if any valid critical analysis is to be undertaken.

The language barrier is presumed to be the major problem facing L.E.P. learners who enrol at English-medium schools. (If English language proficiency is a criterion for academic success, it is likely that L.E.P. learners will be disadvantaged.) However, findings indicate that the language issue is not the critical element in the academic success of L.E.P. learners but rather, the extent to which the school and teachers attempt to address the alienation and marginalisation from the curriculum and culture of the school, that these learners experience.

Current educational theories propose that, if schooling is to meet the needs of L.E.P. learners, alternatives to traditional schooling are a necessity. Focus should be on changing the curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners, rather than simply expecting L.E.P. learners to fit into the existing culture of a school. Simply assimilating these learners into the curriculum as it is, does not guarantee the equalisation of opportunities for all learners. In schools where only one worldview dominates, effective learning is limited, and the goal of education policy (equal opportunities for all learners), is not easily realised.

It can be concluded that a policy of assimilation exists at Mowat Park, and that curriculum innovation, including elements of the non-Western worldview, is hardly happening. Some innovative initiatives need to be implemented at Mowat Park, as a means of overcoming the possible marginalisation and alienation of L.E.P. learners. Adopting a holistic approach to education seems favourable, where all cultural backgrounds are equally valued, supported and seen as integrated into the curriculum. The challenge for Mowat Park, is to provide pupils from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds with access to an education which not only broadens their horizons, but also affirms their cultural and linguistic roots.

There is a need to develop the school's curriculum towards addressing the requirements of a post-apartheid education system. Implementing a critical anti-racist pedagogy will educate Mowat Park learners for a nonracial democratic society. To cope with these new challenges and responsibilities, teachers need additional knowledge and skills to empower them and their learners. It seems that teachers are generally not equipped for the challenges of teaching in multicultural integrated classrooms, and that little systematic effort has been made to develop in-service training courses for teachers in multicultural settings. There is a need for a structured teacher development program at Mowat Park, towards the end of implementing a critical anti-racist pedagogy.

The main objective of education within the present South Africa, is to provide quality education for *all* learners. Education should be a vehicle for self-development and fulfilment, affording *all* learners the opportunity to grow and develop on *all* levels. The findings from this study indicate that Mowat Park has taken positive steps towards responding to the diversity in its learner population. However, much change and adaptation is still needed. The challenges and responsibilities that lie ahead for Mowat Park, will ensure *all* its learners better opportunities to grow, develop and fulfil their potential.

Realism is of paramount importance in times of transition. Changing the previous education system in South Africa, to one which fosters democracy and social tolerance of the 'other', presents an enormous challenge. Change is a process and processes always take time. One cannot afford to have unrealistic expectations or to make too harsh or hasty a judgement, if findings show there is not enough positive change. While it is believed that Mowat Park should be praised for its good practice, it simultaneously needs to be further encouraged towards realising the ultimate goal of multicultural education, that of social change.

APPENDIX 1.

Icebreaker :

Tell me about your primary schooling experiences before you enrolled at Mowat Park.

What characteristics, instances or happenings stand out in your memory ?

How much English did your teachers use at primary school ?

How do your primary school years compare with your high school years ?

Key Content Section :

Tell me about the community in which you live ?

Why did you enrol at Mowat Park ?

Have your goals been realised now that you have been at the school for just over two years?

Are you happy about being taught all your subjects through English, and that English is the first language at this school ?

What do your parents feel about this ?

Did / do you experience any difficulties or problems with English as the medium of instruction ?

How much English do you speak socially ?

How much English are you exposed to through the media - newspapers, television, books?

What do you think other people think about you attending this school ?

What would you say was the happiest and / or most painful experience you have had in the first two years at this school ?

How do you feel you are performing academically in this English medium school ?

Tell me about the different cultures in this school.

Does the school take into account the different cultures when planning activities and lessons?

Tell me about your teachers at this school.

What are your views on how they teach ?

What is your view on racism ?

Have you had any experiences of racism at the school ?

If you could make any changes at this school, what would they be ?

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