



**UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCING LEARNER INTEGRATION IN A  
SELECTED EX-MODEL C SCHOOL**

**BY**

**THERESIA JOAKIM KANYOPA**

**BAEd (UDSM); BEd Hons (UNISA); MED (UKZN)**

**STUDENT NUMBER: 217060160**

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## DECLARATION

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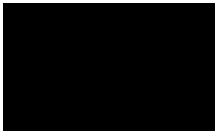
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This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my husband (Mr Daudi Lucas Msebi) and children (Dalila, Ibrahim and Munira).

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study researched the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This study viewed learner integration as a crucial element in the South African schools' context because this phenomenon is linked to the psycho-social elements of the learners' well-being in their learning environment. The study also maintains that learner integration has a transformative agenda as it is now based on democracy, social justice, and emancipation of educational practices that were negatively affected by the apartheid policies inherent in the previous education system in South Africa. This implies that learner integration is essential in ensuring that democracy, equity, and equality are entrenched in South African schools, specifically in Ex-Model C schools.

Furthermore, learner integration supports the emancipation of these learners and enhances collaboration with the various educational stakeholders by showing that their contribution and commitment to this issue might bring changes and create an effective learner integration for all the learners at school, whilst enabling them to learn, grow and develop holistically in their learning environment. A growing body of literature has shown that there are some shortcomings in the former Model C schools' system that inhibit the implementation of effective learner integration as well as the learning process, growth, and development of the learners in their learning environment. This study proposes an integration wheel that illustrates ways in which Ex-Model C schools could create a conducive learning environment with an effective learner integration implementation.

This is a qualitative research study that was guided by a Participatory Action Research design within the interpretive-cum-critical paradigm. The study employed multiple data generation methods consisting of several stakeholder meetings and photovoice visual data based on a reflective writing activity in response to the research questions. The Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) is the theoretical framework because it emphasises the emancipation, promotion of social justice, and empowerment of the co-researchers. The research process of this study drew on the CER theory principles whereby, the data were generated from the co-researchers' voices reflecting their perspectives, subjective experiences and knowledge concerning the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in their school. Moreover, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to analyse the data generated from the multiple

methods mentioned above. CDA is compatible with PAR and CER because it is emancipatory by nature, and it allows the co-researchers participation in the data analysis procedures by actively involving them in discourse that attempt to shape and transform their society.

The study drew on the findings from the diverse lived experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of the co-researchers of the study. The findings of the study revealed three themes: **(i) *Multi-perspectival understanding of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school context***, **(ii) *Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration***; and **(iii) *Significance of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration***. The findings from the first theme revealed that multi-perspectives on the co-researchers' understanding of the learner integration phenomenon. The second theme of the study showed that co-researchers have the capabilities to suggest dynamic strategies for the enhancement of learner integration within their schools. This theme found that effective learner integration in an Ex-Model C school could be possible through multidimensional strategies that could be employed by the school authority as well as by the school community. Finally, the third theme reveals the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing process of learner integration issues in a selected Ex Model C school. The co-researcher's comments on this theme indicated that learner integration has a huge impact not just on a learner's academic achievements but also on their overall well-being as individuals.

However, in Chapter Seven (section 7.3) the study revealed several implications that emerged from the findings of the study regarding learner integration such as poor support from some of the parents and teachers and monocultural practices. Chapter Three (section 3.5) of this study presents a literature review on the impediments that inhibit the successful implementation of learner integration in various school contexts. Thus, to deal with the impediments that hinder the successful learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, this study insisted that the school itself, the Department of Education (DOE) through the curriculum developers needs to work hand-in-hand with other educational stakeholders like teachers, parents, learners, and the school community.

**Keywords:** Learner, Integration, Ex-Model C School, Understanding, Enhancing.

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## **TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AU	African Union
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CER	Critical Emancipatory Research
CT	Critical Theory
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DOE	Department Of Education
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EEA	Employment Equity Act
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
ESC	European Social Charter
EU	European Union
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
FET	Further Education and Training
FGBSAS	Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools
GSS	General Schools' hold Survey
HOD	Head of the Department
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

ICESCR	International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights
ILAPE	Inter Latin American Partnership for Education
ISHP	Integrative School Health Program
KZNDOE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
LST	Learners' Support Team
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NDP	National Development Plan
NPCRSA	National Planning Commission for the Republic of South Africa
NYC	New York City
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RSA	Republic of South Africa Constitution
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relation
SASA	South African School Act
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDT	Staff Development Team
SES	Socio-economic Status
SGB	School Governing Bodies
SMT	School Management Team
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK	United Kingdom
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United State of America
WPET	White Paper of Education and Training

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to research the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school in South Africa. The study begins by seeking the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in the context of a selected Ex-Model C school. Moreover, the study proposed how a selected Ex-Model C school can enhance the implementation of learner integration in its environment. The researcher regards the issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school as vital because she believes that it could influence the learners' growth and development.

The chapter introduces the research phenomenon by providing an overview for the readers to know what can be expected in this research. It begins by presenting the history of the South African educational system which forms the background of the study followed by the focus of the study and the rationale of this study. Also, it briefly introduces the Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) approach as a theoretical framework of this study and Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the research design for this study. It goes further to present the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach as the data analysis method for this study. This chapter also discusses the purpose and the aim of the study followed by the research objectives, key research questions, research context, and significance of the study as well as the delimitations of the study. Lastly, it defines the research methodology, and a layout of the chapters and concludes with a summary.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The post-apartheid South African educational policy emphasised the need for and right of every learner to receive a quality education. This was initiated through the inclusive education policy as specified in the White Paper 6 of 1996. However, a body of literature has revealed that schools during the apartheid era were conducted on an exclusionary basis (Alexander & Mpisi, 2014; Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel & Tlale, 2015; Machard, 2015). Race was the major category used to recognise the nature of the schools during the apartheid era. Sayed and Ahmed (2015) and Weber (2015) remind us that during the apartheid era, schools were described and divided as

being for white, Indian, coloured, and African students. Hlalele (2014), Themane and Osher (2014) and Zoch (2015) confirm that the education system in South Africa during apartheid was divided in terms of race and language. Even after the democratically elected government in 1994 the apartheid legacy in the education system still lives on as the poorer South Africans are still getting a poor education as compared to their rich fellow students (Hlalele, 2014; Spaul, 2015; Moses, Van der Berg & Rich, 2017). Studies affirm that the apartheid education system contributed to social problems such as violence, poverty, racism, and the formation of certain perceptions that cause misunderstanding as well as conflicts within schools and in South African society (Tabane; 2010; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Naidoo, 2015; Gamoran & An, 2016). Owens, Reardon, and Jencks (2016) and Soupen (2017) assert that the segregation policy in the South African apartheid government contributed to a persistent feature of racial distinction not only in South African society but also in its whole education system.

It is affirmed that the segregation in the education system under the apartheid policy created deceitful contingent perceptions in the South African society and in schools which were defined by class, language, and race (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015; Freidus, 2019). The report by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) in 2014 disclosed that cultural and racial prejudice is endemic in many schools and that is the main reason for the absence of racial interaction and integration in many schools (Alexander & Mpisi, 2014; Robertson & Graven, 2015; Chisholm & Nkomo, 2015).

However, the change in the South African government in 1994 from apartheid to democracy brought a transformation to the South African educational system and policy which has been developed and redeveloped to redress the imbalances caused by apartheid in schools and society. Hence, schools in post-apartheid South Africa are divided according to their nature, location, resources, and functions (Moses et al., 2017; Zoch 2017). There were different types of schools established in the 1980s and early 1990s by the apartheid government, and education was compulsory for all racial groups. However, the schools' structures were maintained differently (Stuurman, 2013; Coetzee, 2014; Zoch, 2017). Kotze, Van der Westhuizen, and Bernard (2017) argue that the whites' schools and education were under continuous reconstruction, as a result, in 1991 whites' schools were divided into four 'Models' which were A, B, C, and D. Of these four Models only the "Model C was a semi-private structure model with the decreased funding from the state which leads to its greatly increased autonomy in its

operations” (Kotze et al. 2017, p. 45). In essence, the Model C schools were derived from a defunct semi-private structured school system or the only ‘whites’ government schools which were introduced by the apartheid government in 1991- 1993 (Stuurman, 2013; Bartlett, 2016; Christie & McKinney, 2017). The report by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) (2019) showed that the South African government in 2012 took the decisive step of declaring that all white schools would be classified as Model C schools. This meant that the 200 out of 254 Model A and B schools were re-classified as Model C schools and the remaining 54 were still operating as only white schools. The term ‘Model C’ is still commonly used to describe those schools that were formerly whites-only but now as multicultural schools.

The studies by Zoch (2015), Hill (2016) and Zoch (2017) contend that most of Ex- Model C schools are administered and largely funded by the parent body. This implies that these schools charge high school fees and parents are also required to do the fundraising for the school each year. Kotze et al., (2017) affirm that in 1993 most ‘Model’ white schools became ‘Model C’ schools although most of them opted to operate under the status quo. This suggests that the post-apartheid South African government renamed the schools and called them Ex-Model C to describe them as former whites-only government schools (Soudien, 2010; Cappy, 2016; Gamoran & An, 2016).

However, the considerable increase in black, coloured and Indian learners’ enrolment in Ex Model C schools has been highlighted in the report by the SAIRR which notes that by the end of 2009, about 776 whites-only schools out of a total of 1030 had transferred from being Model A and B to Model C. This is also supported by the 2021 report from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) which revealed a significant increase in black African learners’ enrolment into the Ex-Model C schools between the years 2015 to 2020. Nonetheless, the recently released results of the General Schools’ Survey (GSS) found that in the year 2020 the number of Ex-Model C schools in the country was more than 11,586 in all provinces. The results from the GSS survey also affirm that about 311,765 learners of different races enrolled in Ex-Model C schools each year and that Ex-Model C primary schools have about 211,685 learners while the Ex-Model secondary schools enrol about 100,080 learners each year. Therefore, statistics show that the percentage of enrolled learners into Ex-Model C schools increased up to 60.4 percent each year showing enrolment figures as 22.1 percent black African learners; 18.1

percent white learners; 13.1 percent coloured learners; and 7.1 percent Indian learners (GSS, 2020).

Significantly, the above increase in black learners' enrolment into Ex Model C schools is attributed to black parents' belief that Ex Model C schools provide quality education for their learners as well as help their children to pursue better opportunities in their future lives (Christie & McKinney, 2017; Slabbert & Naude, 2022). It can also be suggested that parental concern for their children's future in seeking for better education was another reason for the increase in black learners' enrolment in Ex-Model C schools (Canham, 2019; Slabbert & Naude, 2022). The 2020 annual report of the Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FGBSAS) affirms that there is an increase in the transferring of white learners from the Ex-Model C schools to single-medium Afrikaans schools. However, recent literature shows that the increase of black learners in a selected Ex Model C school has resulted in the decrease of white learners who would rather move to either private or predominantly Afrikaans medium schools where they can still get mother tongue. Recently, Hiss and Peck (2020) confirmed that Ex Model C schools have either only a few white learners or none at all and this could be regarded as 'white flight'.

Recent studies reveal that Ex-Model C schools are still funded and resourced by the South African Government in diverse ways (Hlalele, 2014; Maharaj, 2016; Moses et al., 2017; Kanyopa, 2019). In 1996 the South African government developed an educational policy enshrined in the South African School Act (SASA) no 84, which states that the country's educational system was not going back to a segregated education system and proclaimed the right to education for all learners (RSA, 1996; Van Wyk, 2015; Hill, 2016; Miles & Naidoo, 2017). Meanwhile, the aim of SASA is to ensure the public schools in South Africa become open for every learner, regardless of their race, background, or status (De Kadt, Fleisch, Richter & Alvanides, 2014; Van Wyk, 2015; Grobler et al., 2017). This implies that SASA was introduced to liberate schools in South Africa and to ensure all schools become more inclusive and open for all learners regardless of their backgrounds.

Through inclusive educational policies such as SASA and the White paper 6, schools in South Africa are expected to engage in inclusionary educational practices and the educational systems should also ensure that learners are well-integrated into Ex-Model C schools. Learner



integration therefore implies on the one hand, learners' complete involvement and inclusion in all the affairs of the school. On the other hand, it also means that the school should ensure that learners are supported and received the needed care. They should also create an enabling learning environment for them (Miles & Naidoo, 2017; Freidus, 2019). Based on the above factors, the study aims to understanding and to seek the ways in which learner integration can be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school to promote learning and growth to the learners.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite the introduction of inclusive policies during the post-apartheid South African Educational system which gives equal opportunities to the citizens to attend any government school of their choice (Goldstone 2017; Canham 2019; Francis 2019), these scholars show that some South African schools still engage in some exclusionary practices such as gender exclusion, whereby the school is identified as being only for girls or boys. Furthermore, some schools were identified as catering only to students of a particular religion, for instance, Muslim schools, Christian schools, or Hindu schools. This implies that the perspectives, thoughts, perceptions, and opinions of how schools could move from catering only to specific students to catering to a diverse population of learners and staff in schools for many years were suppressed.

Current research seems to indicate that learner integration is one of the most important issues in the learning environment that makes the learning process effective and productive (Christie & McKinney, 2017; Canham, 2019; Macleod, Du Toit, Paphitis & Kelland, 2020). In essence, recent research on the impact of school quality in South Africa, found that Ex-Model C schools produce learners with a higher level of education (Kamwangamalu & Tovaes, 2016; Slabbert & Naude, 2022). Although these schools seem to prepare their learners with qualities to compete in the global labour market, learners and teachers in a selected Ex-Model C school mentioned that lack of an effective integration has negative impacts on learners' achievement. Consequently, the multicultural nature of Ex-Model C schools needs a high level of learner integration as it was mentioned that it helps learners to achieve a higher level of cognitive development (Coetzee, 2014; Machard, 2015; Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016).

For instance, Miles and Naidoo (2017) reveal that learners' integration in Ex-Model C schools remains a sensitive issue because of the speedy transformation process in the education system

which was applied very soon after the democratic election of 1994. Other studies also found that despite the new political dispensation in South Africa which brought about a drastic adjustment in the education system, Schools Management Teams (SMTs) and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) especially in former whites' schools (Ex-Model C) seems not to give enough attention to the integration of the diverse learners, thus defeating the purpose of equal educational opportunities. (Coetzee- VanRooy, 2016; Soupen, 2017; Miles & Naidoo, 2017).

Some scholars also contend that South African schools are confronted with many challenges in promoting learner integration due to the unwillingness of some people to adjust and accommodate other races, customs, and cultures (Chisholm, 2015; Nieto, 2015; Moses et al., 2017). As well as unwillingness of the SGBs and SMTs to react towards the situation (Spaull, 2013; Alexander & Mpisi, 2014; Chisholm, 2015).

Drawing from the above problem of unwillingness to change and accommodate the diverseness in a multicultural learning context, it is pertinent to note that for the effective implementation of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools there is a need for the revival of schools' practices, programs, and policies to find the best ways to create an integrative learning environment. This should be started by changing of perspectives and attitudes of people about integration that everyone is able and deserves to be treated justly. Second, the schools should maintain high sense of integration by embracing everyone. The school should maintain the integrative environment in which learners could learn, grow, develop and achieve their academic goals. Lastly, the schools' processes should enable the learners to feel safe and supported.

Nevertheless, the evidence from research by Monageng (2012); McCrimmon (2015); Llinares (2015), and Akhmetshin, Makulov, Talysheva, Fedorova and Gubarkov (2017) reveals that learner integration into Ex- Model C schools could only be achieved successfully by valuing the learners' diversities based on their backgrounds, ethnic group, status, or race. Therefore, this study maintains that Ex-Model C schools were previously culture-oriented schools under the apartheid government and undoubtedly still are. However, they are required now under the new educational policies to engage and assimilate learners from other races into their school culture, norms, and ethics. Meanwhile, Alexander and Mpisi (2014) with Bartlett (2016) assert that dominant schools' ethics and culture which were characterised by Ex-Model C schools'

programs, processes, and practices remained largely unchanged and seem to be enjoyed by only whites (the dominant group) while students from other race groups are expected to adapt to the Eurocentric culture which predominates in these schools.

When commenting on the social and cultural barriers that arose due to the schools' cultural diversity Macleod et al. (2020) pointed out that Ex-Model C schools continue to uphold principles of their traditional values and ethos inherited from the apartheid education system. Consequently, the composition of teachers in some of these schools remains predominantly white (Macleod et al., 2020). Moreover, Christie and McKinney (2017) when exploring the decolonisation of Ex-Model C schools found out that although the cultural demography within the schools changed this did not change the dominant culture, ethos, or the quality of education of some of the Ex-Model C schools.

Thus, various issues identified above prompted me to conduct this research by ensuring that the following objectives were met: 1. To understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. 2. To enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. 3. To examine the need for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. In this study, the learner integration phenomenon reinforced the idea that an Ex-Model C school is a multicultural learning environment which is dealing with diverse learners; hence, their thoughts, cultures, religions, races, and languages should be valued equally.

#### **1.4 FOCUS OF THE STUDY**

Some scholars such as Hiss and Peck (2020) with Slabbert and Naude (2022) reveal that some of Ex-Model C schools adopt an assimilation approach. In which learners who are exposed to this approach are expected to adapt to the existing ethos of the school and to curricula that have been developed for a different learner population. In his research on integration and learner' feelings of belonging in a desegregated former whites' schools, Tabane (2010) concluded that the process of desegregation in these schools is primarily a case of assimilating learners of other races into the school and its culture which results to non-integrative practices. This suggests that some black, Indian and coloured learners who attend Ex-Model C schools are experiencing a lack of integration because the school systems are still operated under the dominant race group (white) rules, ethics and culture. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The background and problem statement of the study justify the need to embark this study and it is considered to be important and relevant in bringing about significant structural reform and address learner integration challenges in a selected Ex-Model C school.

## **1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

My reasons for conducting this research were derived from three fundamental factors, namely my personal and professional experiences as well as from contextual perspectives. From the personal experience I am a mother of the child who attends in one of the Ex-Model C schools in Durban. In his schooling years my child was and still is confronting some challenges with assimilating himself to some of schools' programmes. Other African black parents and I were challenged also to cope with some schools' routines, programs and events that are organised based on the whites' supremacy. From professional motivation for this study was influenced by the findings of my M. Ed research that explored the experiences of learners transitioning from Township to Ex-Model C schools using an Invitational Education perspective. Drawing from my M. Ed study I found that learners transitioning from Township to Ex-Model C schools were confronted with multifaceted learning experiences. This means that learners at Ex-Model C school learning experiences were both positive and negative. This further implies that Ex-Model C schools had both inviting and disinviting factors in their learning environments that influenced their learners' learning and holistic development.

In addition, the findings from my M. Ed study also revealed that there were more disinviting than inviting factors experienced by the learners in a selected Ex-Model C school which hindered their learning experiences, growth, and development. Some of these factors are indicated as social exclusion practised in the classroom; language barriers as they felt excluded due to their cultural background as most of the learners are not English first-language speakers; group dynamics formed in the classroom and school environment; loneliness; alienation as well as lack of support from their fellow learners, administrative and academic staff (Spaull, 2013; Radebe, 2015; Grobler et al., 2017; Kanyopa, 2019). The literature above identified some of the psychosocial issues that are also experienced by learners in a selected Ex-Model C school, and this prompted me to conduct this research which seeks to investigate the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. However, to promote learners' well-being and enrichment of knowledge and positive learning experiences in a

selected Ex-Model C school. My M. Ed study recommended the drafting of a cultural integration policy that would aim to promote cultural understanding in multicultural schools or communities to provide a better teaching and learning environment (Banks, 2015; Nieto, 2015; Akhmetshin, et al., 2017; Kanyopa, 2019).

A growing body of research also highlights the significance of integration in schools and the important of integrating learners culturally and socially for them to achieve and develop academically and holistically. For example, nationally, Alexander and Mpisi (2014); Nieto (2015); and Radebe (2015) affirm that poor integration in schools makes learners experience both academic and social difficulties. On the other hand, Maharaj (2016) together with Miles and Naidoo (2017) in their studies identify that the lack of effective learner integration in schools affects most learners psychologically and emotionally when they enter tertiary institutions in South Africa. This implies that poor learner integration leads to inferior knowledge and low self-esteem since the learners lack vital information and direction on what courses to choose or to select which causes most learners to end up with vague reasoning for their chosen course of study (Abrahams, Jano & van Lill, 2015; Maharaj 2016; Akhmetshin et al., 2017).

Noting the advanced reasons, it is clear that there is a need for cultural and social integration of learners in South African schools. The studies by Hiss and Peck (2020) with Slabbert and Naude (2022) showed some of the challenges experienced by learners due to the lack of integration in schools which further affects their learning, growth and development. However, these studies failed to indicate ways in which learner integration could be understood and enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school. In addition, most studies conducted on learner integration have been undertaken in private schools and not in state or public schools such as in townships and in Ex-Model C schools which makes this study relevant. This shows that there is a paucity of literature on the understanding of learner integration, especially in Ex- Model C schools, and an equal paucity of studies that proposed ways in which learner integration could be enhanced in these schools.

Meanwhile, studies on the issue of learner integration in schools failed to show how schools could create or provide a meaningful way or means to enhance learner integration in South African schools, particularly in Ex-Model C schools (Spaull 2013; Radebe, 2015; Maharaj

2016). Thus, this suggests that some of the Ex- Model C schools might not have the knowledge or understanding of what learner integration means. Hence, this study intends to explore the principal's, the two grade eleven teachers' (male and female), and four grade eleven learners' understandings and perceptions of learner integration and how they understand it and how they think it can be enhancing it within a selected Ex-Model C school.

## **1.6 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study's aim is to research the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. To achieve this aim, this study was guided by the following objectives:

- To understand learner integration through the co-researchers' perspectives in a selected Ex-Model C school;
- To explore ways which could enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school; and
- To examine the need and importance for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

## **1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- How could learner integration be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?

## **1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of this study is to research the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Recent studies (Kang, 2015; Bianco & Slaughter, 2016; Rombaoa, 2019) have revealed that learner integration is a complex phenomenon and that the concept is influenced by many issues such as the sense of belonging, learning experiences, and

well-being of the people researched (Asher & Sen, 2015; Marwan & Sweeney, 2019). Therefore, it is important for the researcher and people within the research context to work together as a team in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to figure out how they could enhance learner integration in schools (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014; Bianco & Slaughter, 2016).

The study is guided by the Critical Emancipatory Research theory (CER) as its theoretical framework to research on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. CER was adopted as the research perspective to ameliorate social exclusion, disintegration, alienation, and injustice through allowing, respecting, and listening to the co-researchers' views, voices, and perceptions (Nkoane; 2012; Maboya, 2014; Msimanga, 2017). Kramer-Roy, (2015) together with Dube and Hlalele (2018) claim that CER has emerged in connection with many social movements which identify various forms of domination, and that call for social justice and equity of human beings in society.

The CER theory is framed by four elements, namely social justice, emancipation, transformation and enhancement of human lives (Masimanga, 2017; CohenMiller & Pate, 2019). The promotion of social justice by drawing on CER theory requires the cooperation and involvement of every person involved in the research process so as to limit the issue of discrimination and oppression (Pearson, 2016). On the aspect of emancipation, CER theory enables people from diverse backgrounds and status levels to work together in the atmosphere of freedom and empowerment (Jacobs, 2016; Hooley, Sultana & Thomsen, 2018). The element of transformation in CER helps to raise the awareness and consciousness of people on issues such as power, oppression, discrimination, and social injustices that need to be addressed in their societies (Fujino, Gomez, Lezra, Lipsitz, Mitchel & Fonseca, 2018). Fujino et al., (2018) argue that the element of transformation used in CER can be seen successfully through the emancipation, empowerment, transparency, and social justice of the people. Lastly, enhancing human lives in CER is to ensure that the living conditions of people in the research context are improved (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018). Roggerone (2018, p. 49) asserts that the process of improving human lives under CER theory is “based on negotiation, empowerment, and reciprocity”.

Therefore, with the purpose of this study, which explores the understanding and enhancing process of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, CER has been found to be a relevant theoretical framework that aims at creating a space and empowerment for the oppressed (Maboya 2014; Chidarikire, 2017; Mokotjo, 2017). Accordingly, during the research process, this study created space for its co-researchers by empowering them through photovoice sessions, multi-stakeholder meetings, reflective writing activities, and other social interactions.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.9.1 Research paradigm (Interpretive-cum-critical)**

A research paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality that give rise to a particular worldview (Flick, 2014; Hua, 2015; Antwi & Hamza, 2015). On the one hand, it is described as a web that encompasses beliefs (Patton, 2015); Allen, 2016; Padgett, 2016). A paradigm constitutes axiology, ontology, epistemology assumptions and methodology (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Yin, 2015; Hua, 2015). Ontology refers to what a researcher thinks reality looks like and how he/she views the world; epistemology refers to the nature of how knowledge is known; while ‘methodology’ focuses on how the researcher attains knowledge about the world and how the data is generated (Struwig & Stead, 2013; Flick, 2014; Smith, 2015).

This study employed an interpretive-cum-critical paradigm which first offers a voice to the co-researchers by encouraging them to raise their consciousness and understanding of the researched issue, and the agenda of changes proposed to improve the situation researched (Scotland, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2016; Moore & Manning, 2019). More importantly, this perspective views the research context, co-researchers, and their social behaviour as interrogative dimensions that provide an internal disciplinary insight-cum-development into the researched phenomenon (Lynch & Zoller, 2015).

The sense of collaboration and active participation which is influenced by the PAR design and CER theoretical framework is used to frame this study and to help the researcher to treat the co-researchers as co-producers of knowledge who for this study were involved in creating the knowledge on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex- Model



C school. Through the discussions and active involvement, the co-researchers of this study were able to construct their understanding of the phenomenon and further propose some ways in which learner integration could be enhanced in their school. In this interpretive-cum-critical paradigm both the researcher and co-researchers were actively involved in the discussions which were based on the explanations of the learner integration phenomenon. Further, they were fully engaged in transforming the school practices and programs into more integrative operations by proposing effective ways that could shape the enhancement of learner integration within the selected Ex-Model C school.

### **1.9.2 Research approach**

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The qualitative research approach is a powerful method that gives a researcher the authority and ability to generate detailed data with rich descriptions of what is being studied (Punch, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Padgett, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018). In addition, qualitative research is in depth and relies on direct quotations reflecting people's personal perspectives and experiences (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015). Therefore, this research approach is useful in describing the co-researcher's behaviours, feelings, experiences, and perspectives. In this study, using the qualitative approach promoted freedom of expression for the co-researchers while guiding the researcher to ask questions which required the co-researchers to share freely their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding the phenomenon (Patton, 2015; 2017; Creswell, 2016; Flick, 2018).

More importantly, the qualitative approach provides the study with a research methodology that drew from the explanations of social phenomena that occur naturally (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Emerson, 2015; Flick, 2018). Employing the qualitative research approach in this study enabled me to conduct research on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school which was in a natural setting as well. In addition, this research approach was chosen to conduct this study in order to encourage collaboration of the researcher and co-researchers in the research site over time, and it also directed and guide the active participation within the research environment.

### **1.9.3 Research design: Participatory Action Research**

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was adopted as the research design for this study. PAR is a qualitative research design that focuses on solving certain educational and research problems (Wahyuni, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). PAR is defined as a comparative research approach that involves the determination of planning and actions that will be taken and the fact-finding that is facilitated by such actions (Wang, 1999; Algozzine & Hancock, 2017; Mokotjo, 2017). In a similar vein, Scotland (2012) and Chidarikire (2017) affirm that the purpose of the PAR design is to seek a particular way in which the research problem can be solved. PAR emancipates marginalised individuals in society by giving them an opportunity to participate actively in the whole process of transformation and affords them respect by valuing their opinions and perceptions. It is argued that PAR is an approach to conducting a research study that aims to use the actions taken in an unfavourable situation and to create from this a framework that will facilitate a favourable situation (Cohen et al., 2018 & Kanyopa, 2019). Scholars acknowledged that PAR provides value through the participation of people who are affected by the research issues, and it encourages their sense of collaboration in solving the issues throughout the research process (Bradbury, 2015; Mokotjo, 2017 & Mbambo, 2019). During the research process I, as the researcher, promoted my co-researchers' potential contributions to the study by encouraging them to be fully involved in the research process, and I gave them the opportunity to ask questions, give suggestions, make decisions, and to contribute their knowledge to the study. Consequently, employing two cycles of PAR in this study, enabled me to become a facilitator and to see my co-researchers as professionals and partners throughout the research process. This enabled me to navigate and suppress the issue of power dynamics which could have been derived from a highly hierarchical power relationship where the researcher is seen as the main actor. To avoid this, I created a more egalitarian relationship with my co-researchers as valued collaborators in the study.

### **1.9.4 Selection of co-researchers and the research site**

Selection of participants or co-researchers in qualitative research is purposeful (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This means that the co-researchers selected should be in the best position to inform the research questions and to increase understanding of the phenomenon under study. Patton (2015) also indicates that a purposeful sampling strategy is considered to be a dominant co-researcher's selection method in the qualitative research sampling undertaken. Therefore,

for this study, the research site (location of the study) and the seven co-researchers (the principal of the school, two teachers (male and female) who have been working in the school for more than twenty years, and the four grade eleven learners, who were between the ages of 16 and 18 years old, were selected using the purposive, convenience and snowball sampling methods. These three selected sampling methods are non-probability sampling techniques employed in a qualitative study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Emerson (2015) explain that a purposive sample is a non-probability sample in which the co-researchers' selection is based on their characteristics and how these line up with the objectives of the study. Convenience sampling is also a non-probability sampling whereby the co-researchers are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the study (Flick, 2014; Emerson, 2015; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The snowball sampling method occurs when the co-researchers are asked to recommend other co-researchers that they know of who has a better understanding on the researched issue and can answer the research questions well. Further the researcher is required to explain the research criteria and co-researchers should willingly and voluntarily participate in the study (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2020).

For the purpose of this study, the purposive and convenience sampling methods were employed to guide me (the researcher) in the selection of the school as well as its principal. The selection of the research site (school) was based on the following criteria: a multicultural and multiracial school that is under quintile one; a well-resourced school and one that is easily accessible and conveniently close to my house. The principal was purposively selected because she is in charge of managing the school and she is also a member of the School Management Team (SMT) as well as the School Governing Body (SGB). Her contribution to this study was considered to be important since she has been in control of running the day-to-day affairs of the school and always ensures that the teachers adhere to all the school rules and policies. Through the principal, I was able to select the teachers and grade 11 learners by using the snowball sampling method.

These two teachers were chosen based on their experiences of teaching in the particular school for more than 10 years and the four grade 11 learners were chosen through the recommendation of their teachers and the principal based on their knowledge and experiences of the

phenomenon as they had been studying in the selected school for more than four years (since grade 8) and were actively involved in the school extracurricular activities as well as having transited from township primary school to the Ex-Model C school. All the selected co-researchers were beneficial to this study as they were able to share their ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and understanding of the researched phenomenon, and together they were able to propose ways in which the school could enhance learner integration in its daily programs.

### **1.9.5 Data generation methods**

Data generation is an act of gathering and producing information that is relevant to the research phenomenon. In other words, data generation methods are the ways or procedures which a researcher uses to generate data during the research process (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this study, data were generated using multi-stakeholder meetings, the photovoice activity, and art-based and reflective writing activities as data-generating methods.

#### **1.9.5.1 Multi-stakeholder meetings**

A multi-stakeholder meeting is a data generation activity mostly used in participatory research to “bring together all the people who are involved in the certain ‘stake’ and provide them with a sense of collaboration and commitment” (Dodds, 2019, p. 112). Studies on qualitative research have identified the importance of doing research using multi-stakeholder meetings in generating data (Menashy, 2017; Hiss & Peck, 2020). Generating data using multi-stakeholder meetings, according to Archibald, Ambagtsheer, and Lawless (2019, p. 24), brings about “a meaningful engagement and encouragement to the co-researchers’ [stakeholders’] ownership of the research process”. This data generation method also enables the co-researchers to develop authentic perspectives and to explore people’s experiences, feelings, behaviour, and thoughts (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018; Mbambo, 2019).

Didham (2020) believes that using a multi-stakeholder meeting is the easiest way of generating data because it creates space for dialogue and discussion between the stakeholders which will enable them to establish a roadmap that simplifies and discovers a possible solution to the research problem. Engaging the stakeholders in deep discussions and debates during the meetings in this study provided the researcher with rich raw data. This suggests that the co-researchers engaged in discussions and shared their experiences through open-ended questions,

and they reflected on and argued for and against their claims, thereby producing in-depth information relating to the phenomenon of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

A study by Didham (2020) identified that there are five essential groups of stakeholders in a school, namely the school leaders (principal), teachers, other school staff members (school administrators), learners, and parents or guardians. Hiss and Peck (2020) argue that stakeholders in education are people involved in the welfare and success of a school and its learners and this includes school administrators, teachers, staff members, learners, parents or guardians and all other officially elected members of the SMT and the SGB.

In this study, the multi-stakeholder meetings were conducted with the principal, two teachers (male and female), and the four grade 11 learners. The meetings were held at different times on four different days. These were aligned with the four phases of the PAR research design. The first multi-stakeholder meeting was aligned with the first phase of PAR which is the planning phase. Moreover, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the co-researchers were contacted via WhatsApp messenger and on the WhatsApp conference call platform which was organised to inform them of my intention to have them as my co-knowledge producers (co-researchers) for this study. During the first stakeholder meeting, the co-researchers were engaged in a dialogue and discussion which focused mainly on the school policies, programs, or practices that seemed to influence their understanding of the phenomenon (learner integration).

The second multi-stakeholder meeting was influenced by the second phase of PAR which is the action phase. Thus, the co-researchers were made to work together by discussing the different ways or strategies that could enhance learner integration in the selected Ex-Model C School. This phase requires the researcher and co-researchers to examine and explore the existing programs and policies that the particular Ex-Model C school embraces to accommodate its learners' diversity at school and to search for better ways to improve these policies. The third multi-stakeholder meeting was aligned with the third phase of the PAR design which required the stakeholders to observe their surroundings and from their observations to engage in a discussion on ways to enhance what they identified in their school. I also asked the co-researchers to monitor their daily experiences to see how the different discussions and dialogue had influenced their understanding and also how it had made significant changes to the different ways learners' integration takes place within the school.

Lastly, the fourth multi-stakeholder meeting corresponds to the fourth phase of PAR design namely, reflection. In this phase, the co-researchers were requested to reflect on the whole research process and to write a reflective essay or voice record on their understanding of learner integration and how learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school.

#### **1.9.5.2 Photovoice method**

The photovoice method is a data generation method that was originally proposed by Wang and Burris in the 1990s. It is referred to as a participatory visual methodology that allows individuals to take charge of the photography process to describe, reflect on and converse about their everyday life and experiences (Nwokedi, 2019; Wang, 2009). Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) explain that it is a very strong photographic method that encourages critical dialogue and creates knowledge. Utilising photovoice in research could quicken and enhance discussion and encourage the co-researchers to become more actively involved (Mitchell, 2011; Wang, 2009).

In this study, the photovoice data generation method is incorporated into the PAR research design, and it followed the four PAR phases which put a camera in the hands of co-researchers to document the realities of their daily lives (Wang, 2010; Nwokedi, 2015). Four grade 11 learners participated in the photovoice data generation method for this study.

The photovoice data generation took place in four sessions based on the PAR design. First, I conducted a photovoice workshop via Zoom with my co-researchers (learners) to explain the photovoice method and to explain how to generate data using digital cameras and smartphone cameras. This was done by using a brief PowerPoint presentation via Zoom to show them some examples of research that had used photovoice methodology. At the end of this session, I also explained the ethical guidelines related to taking photographs as explained in Wang (1999) and Gubrium and Harper (2016). This session lasted for one hour. In addition, the first session corresponded with the first phase of PAR which is known as the plan as well as the preparation phase (Loewenson, Laurell, Hogstedt, D'Ambrouso & Shoroff, 2014). In the planning phase, the researcher and the co-researchers are given the opportunity to understand the research process and also to establish a structure for involvement and commitment to participate in the PAR process and this is evidenced in the first session of the photovoice method where I and my co-researchers were fully engaged and involved in the photovoice workshop for them to

gain knowledge of the existing information to understand the photovoice method using PAR design.

In the second session of the photovoice method, which is also known as the photo shooting session, my co-researchers (learners) were actively involved in capturing different images/photos around their school. The photographs were based on their experiences, knowledge, and thoughts about their understanding of learner integration and on how learner integration can be enhanced in their school. The photo shooting session lasted for one hour and thirty minutes and they took four photographs each. Two of the photographs represented their understanding of learner integration and the other two photographs represented the ways in which learner integration can be enhanced. This session aligns with the second phase of PAR which is an action in which the co-researchers (learners) actively participate in the actual action (taking pictures). I as the researcher was monitoring my co-researchers via WhatsApp calls by ensuring that they participated in the photo-taking process and ensuring that they understood and grasped all the information I gave them.

In the third photovoice session which was the photointerpretation session, each of the co-researchers was given an opportunity to interpret and explain the meanings, understanding and intentions behind each of the four photographs they took. This session aligned with the third phase of PAR which is observation. Co-researchers were asked to interpret their photos in relation to their understanding of the phenomenon and to what exactly was happening in their school. This process took two weeks as learners were asked to send me their responses via my email once they were done. My email address was given to them in the informed consent letters and during our Zoom meetings.

The fourth session was the photo discussion session which was conducted through Zoom meetings with the co-researchers (learners). I used an audio recorder with the consent of my co-researchers to record the discussions concerning the photographs they took. In this session, each of the learners (co-researchers) was given an opportunity to explain what the photographs meant to them in relation to their understanding of the phenomenon (learner integration). I was monitoring their behaviour, responses, and attitudes while discussing the photographs in this session. This session aligned with the fourth phase of the PAR design which is to reflect.

Learners were able to discuss their photos together while reflecting on their schooling environment, school culture, and different programs taking place every day at their school.

### **1.9.5.3 Reflective writing activity**

This study employed a reflective writing activity as the third data generation method. This method is described as an act of writing for a specific time as well as merely jotting down whatever comes to the mind without being concerned with editing whatever has been written (Kolbe & Rudolph, 2018). Meanwhile, Nwokedi (2019) notes that a reflective writing activity allows the co-researchers to reflect on the whole research process. Hence, by participating and engaging in this reflective activity, the co-researchers were able to evaluate the research process and write down their experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and views regarding the whole research process they were engaged in. The reflective writing activity allowed the co-researchers to write about their experiences of participating in both the multi-stakeholder meetings and the photovoice exercise. The co-researchers were given one week to do this activity and to send it to my email. During the waiting period, I was monitoring and calling them through WhatsApp calls to ensure that they still had my email address, and that the activity was continuing satisfactorily.

### **1.9.6 Data analysis (critical discourse analysis)**

The data generated from the multi-stakeholder meetings, the photovoice exercise, and the reflective writing activity were analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is a type of discourse analytical research approach that deals with social problems that seriously threaten the lives and wellbeing of people in society (Asghar, 2013 & Fairclough, 2013). In most cases, studies that apply the CDA tend to be analytical by nature and help to uncover the social problems that arise from the misuse of power by some social institutions or politicians, based on gender or cultural differences. (Fairclough, 2013; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). The main focus of CDA in educational research is on providing tools for addressing the challenges in educational sites, concerning systems and practices in schools and other educational institutions (Asghar, 2013; Gonsalvez, 2013). In order to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, the coherence of social transformation in a selected Ex-Model C school, this study embraced the crucial features of the CER and the PAR design. Thus, the data generated were also analysed based on the three levels of CDA, namely textual analysis, discursive practice



analysis, and at sociocultural practice analysis level. Van Dijk (2015); Cordeiro, Soares, and Rittenmeyer (2017) describe textual analysis as the relationships existing between the texts of the data generated. Discursive practice analysis is seen as the configuration of discourse practices in a selected institution (Wodak & Meyer, 2015; Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019). Lastly, the sociocultural practice analysis is used to interpret the data generated so as to “offer a meaningful explanation of why and how some socio-cultural practices are constituted within the institution” (Chung, 2021, p. 12).

### **1.10 THE VALUE OF THE STUDY**

This study plays a crucial role in providing insight into the development of meaningful and significant learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Also, my intention in this study, as stated above, was to blur the edges between the interpretive and the critical paradigm. It could offer guidance to future researchers who will be involved in similar inquiries. This study will hopefully contribute to the growing body of literature on learner integration in Ex-Model C schools in South Africa which scholars argue is still very limited (Alexander & Mpisi, 2014); Abraham et al., 2015; Gamoran & An, 2016). This study should also assist and support schools’ governing bodies, principals, and other stakeholders in Ex-Model C schools to understand learner integration and the diverse ways in which these schools could enhance and create an integrative learning environment for all their learners regardless of their race, background or status.

### **1.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

The aim of qualitative research is to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the “trustworthiness” of the findings. In order to consider the study’s trustworthiness, proper methods of data generation and data analysis are considered to be the best way for measuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Leung, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Through proper data generation methods, the qualitative study is likely to verify the trustworthiness by demonstrating the credibility and fitness of the study findings and by ensuring its conformability.

For a study to attain the credibility, conformability, dependability, and transferability of the study both the researcher and co-researchers of this study upgraded the following. First, during

the data generation process, all co-researchers were invited to participate in the study. The researcher also applied meticulous record-keeping using an audio recorder and a filed note online, demonstrating a clear decision trail and ensuring that the interpretations and analyses of the co-researcher's perceptions, understandings, opinions, and experiences were consistent and transparent (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Leung, 2015; Smith, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015).

## **1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations in research involve considering what is proper or improper and the right or wrong conduct when undertaking a research project (Gajjar, 2013; Roberts & Allen, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is very important in any research process to protect the co-researchers from any potential harm throughout the research process (Cohen et al., 2013; Dube, 2016). In light of that this study was conducted within the school grounds and the researcher obtained permission from the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE) (see Appendix A) to conduct the study in the selected school. Moreover, the researcher of this study was granted an ethical clearance by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee (see Appendix B) before undertaking it.

As the researcher, I also sought permission from the principal of the school, the selected teachers, and the four learners by providing them with informed consent letters with a declaration that was signed by them (see Appendices C & D). For learners, because they were minors and below 18 years of age, permission was sought from their parents/guardians and all letters were written in simple English for a better understanding of the aims and objectives of the study. It is ethical to ensure that participants understand the aims and objectives before signing their consent to participate in the study (see Appendix, E). The explanation of all ethical issues and the co-researchers' rights to participate in the study including the nature of voluntary participation was clearly explained before the data generation sessions began. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used to represent all the co-researchers (Cohen et al., 2013; Hua, 2015; Smith, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## **1.13 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY**

In order to provide an appropriate and systematic approach to this study, it was arranged into seven chapters as follows:

**Chapter One:** This chapter presents an overview of the study by giving its background, declaring the problem statement, and providing a brief description of the methodology that the study adopted. The objectives and key research questions as well as the motivation to conduct this research on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school were declared.

**Chapter Two:** This chapter frames the study theoretically and discusses the crucial features of Critical Emancipatory Research (CER); by responding to the issue of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

**Chapter Three:** This chapter defines operational concepts and provides a literature review on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter describes the research methodology of the study, and it discusses the qualitative research approach, PAR, as the research design guiding this study as well as the sampling method adopted to select both co-researchers and the research site. This chapter declares all the data generation procedures followed by the researcher in order to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the study.

**Chapter Five:** This chapter explains the presentation and interpretation of the findings on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The chapter further describes the co-researcher's photographs and interprets their responses as well as their self-reflective writings.

**Chapter Six:** This chapter discusses and synthesises the findings of the study from chapter Five. In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented, outlined, interpreted, discussed, and contextualised by using the CER theory, and PAR design as underscored by the relevant literature.

**Chapter Seven:** Provides the conclusion of the study. This chapter offers a summary of the study findings in relation to the created knowledge, perceptions, and co-researcher's opinions regarding the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The chapter also suggests the contribution of the study on the issue of learner integration and lastly, the chapter concludes with implications and recommendations for future research studies.

## **1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an introduction to the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. A considerable body of literature (Angula, Chirimbana & Ungwanga, 2019; Ipinge 2019; Li, 2019; Slabbert & Naude, 2022) has highlighted the need for and importance of the inclusion of integration policies in schools. This is evidenced in Li's (2019) study which revealed the positive impacts of Chinese learner integration in Finnish and in German schools. Findings from these studies affirmed that learner integration in schools paves the way for high employment rates among migrants from countries like China, Sweden, Finland, the USA, and others. Angula et al., (2019) with Ipinge's (2019) study also found that poor implementation of the integration policies contributed to learners' dropout rates and poor academic performances in most schools. Day (2020) argues that the pathways of learner integration in schools involve teaching, learning, and research services. In supporting this view, learner integration in schools should be seen as significant and needs more integrated programs and practices that embrace learners' diversity. In particular, this study concurs with the idea suggested by Hiss and Peck (2020) that good schooling in a selected Ex-Model C school is mainly influenced by race, gender and class factors. This implies that learner integration is possible through the social and cultural engagement of all learners in a school. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework adopted to conduct this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided an overview of the study in which the background of the study, the study context, the aims and objectives, the research questions, and the rationale for this study were presented. This chapter addresses the theoretical framework used to guide and underpin this study. This is the critical emancipatory research framework (CER) which is situated within the broader continuum of critical theory (CT). This chapter traces the CERs' background and origin. It goes further by explaining the evolution phases that align with its ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, the principles and objectives of this framework is outlined. The chapter also explains the role of the researcher, relationship of the researcher and co-researchers as influenced by CER. It also stipulates discussion on the reflection and justification of using CER and conclude with a brief chapter summary.

#### **2.2 DEFINITION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.**

The phrase “theoretical framework” is composed of two distinct concepts, “theory” and “framework”. For the purpose of this study, it is vital to define these two concepts for us to have a clearer understanding of their meaning. Scholars also suggest that the terms “*theory*” and *theoretical framework*” should be used interchangeably because they are both regarded as a set of arguments or assumptions that predict or explain the issue researched (Kitchel & Ball, 2014). On the one hand, a “theory” could be referred to as the instrument used to explain, understand and predict the given subject matter (Pearson, 2016; CohenMiller & Pate, 2019). In the social sciences, a theory is perceived to be an essential foundation in the process of constructing knowledge (Glober et al., 2017; Hoggan, Malkki & Finnegan, 2017; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). In addition, some scholars agreed that the term theory is a formal set of concepts that are intended to explain how and why something exists (Maseko, 2017 & Masimanga, 2017). This study affirms that a theory is a set of assumptions that is used to explain a particular aspect of a researched phenomenon.

On the other hand, a theory is defined as a systematic idea that is not based on a particular thing, person or situation (Nilsen, 2015). This implies that a theory is a set of ideas that are

related to the diversity of a phenomenon and can measure or predict anything at any time with respect to the general principles of the phenomenon concerned or explained. Furthermore, a theory is like a layout that guides, models, and structures the approaches through which a phenomenon will be explained (Imenda, 2014), while other scholars assert that a good theory provides a reader with a clear explanation of how and why a particular relationship leads to a specific outcome (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Others maintain that a theory is a set of interrelated propositions thoughts and explanations that present a systematic point of view (Manual, 2016). In like manner, some believe that it is a theory that specifies the relationship between the concepts and that it explains the prediction about the outcome (Casanave & Li, 2015); Starr, 2019).

Moreover, in academic research, a theory provides a vital guideline for data gathering, presentation, and interpretation. This view is supported by Braun, McCoy, and Finkbeiner (2013); Imenda (2014); and Winarti (2018) who define theory as a set of assumptions that are used to predict and explain the phenomenon researched in an academic or scholarly work. Thus, it is a theory that helps a researcher to answer the question of what, how, and why a particular phenomenon occurred. However, Udo-Akang (2012); and Huber (2020) both remind us that in its application in the research process, a theory always informs practice, and practice informs theory. This means that the theory not only guides the research process but that the theory and research are interdependent on one another to make sense of the issue researched.

Braun et al., (2013) identify three significances of the application of theory in academic research. Firstly, theory increases the possibility of achievement of the research outcome. This is because theory indicates the movement of the research process toward achieving the intended research goal. Secondly, they argue that theory provides the reasons why the study was structured and presented in a particular way. The theory provides the logic for why and how a study is deliberately structured and delivered. And thirdly, they point out that theory helps researchers to explain why and how certain things happen. Theory empowers scholars to combine their experiences in the light of an evidence-based explanation of behavioral change.

A framework can be described as the arrangement of ideas that are introduced and formulated to justify the theory that explains why the research problem under the study exists (Cohen Miller & Pate, 2019). There are two types of the framework in social sciences research, namely

a theoretical framework and a conceptual framework. Nwokedi (2020) defines the conceptual framework as a representation of the practical theory that accompanies it. Recently, scholars clarify the conceptual framework as a plan or network of linked concepts (Zwanka & Buff, 2021). Therefore, the use of the conceptual framework in a research study should give a coherent shape to the concepts linked together in such a way as to provide a visual display of how they are related to the topic researched (Nwokedi, 2020).

Moreover, the theoretical framework is defined as the structure that supports a theory of a research study (Dupuis et al., 2016). In essence, the theoretical framework is broad as it consists of concepts together with their definitions of an existing theory that is used in a particular study (Vinz, 2016; CohenMiller & Pate, 2019; Young, Minton & Mikels, 2021). The use of a theoretical framework in a research study should determine the understanding of the particular theory and its concepts that are relevant to the topic researched (Young et al., 2021).

Drawing from the above discussion on the meaning of “theory” and “framework”, it is possible to describe a “theoretical framework” as a form of guideline that gives understanding to the research process. Some researchers explain that a theoretical framework is a theory that guides the research process (Imenda, 2014 & Walus, 2019). Grant and Osanloo (2014) together with Starr (2019) believe that a theoretical framework is a philosophical foundation from which knowledge is constructed in a study. A theoretical framework can be regarded as a theory that a researcher chooses in order to guide him or her in the research process (Imenda, 2014; Moleko, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017). Therefore, some scholars argue that using a theoretical framework in educational research is important because it helps the reader to understand the position from which the researcher is drawing the facts and knowledge in order to understand the world (Chidarikire, 2017; Masimanga, 2017; Cohen Miller & Pate, 2019). It is also affirmed that using a theoretical framework in a study gives structure and underpins the research work as well as serves as a particular perspective from which the researcher views the phenomenon (Nilsen, 2015; Dube, 2016; Fook, 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018).

Drawing from the discussion presented above, a theoretical framework is a set of critical assumptions that help a researcher structure the study, guide the data generation and analysis process as well as help the researcher understand the whole research process Vinz (2016) agrees with this and states that a good theoretical framework gives the researcher a strong

scientific research base and provides support throughout the research process. The next section discusses CER as the theoretical framework employed to frame this study.

## **2.2.1 Critical Emancipatory Research as the theoretical framework for this study**

### **2.2.1.1 The origin of Critical Emancipatory Research (CER)**

CER as a theoretical framework is derived from the Critical Theory of Emmanuel Kant (1804), a German philosopher (1724–1871), and Hermann Weil (1900) a social theorist who was born in 1876 and died in 1949 (Cupas, 2013; Wellmer, 2014; Chidarikire, 2017). Some research revealed that the CER theory was developed based on preceding discussions by Horkheimer (1993) and McLaughlin (1999) which were based on their argument that Kant's assumptions liberate and empower human beings in their societies (Dube, 2016 & Masimanga, 2017). Other research supported that CER is mainly concerned with the issues of power relations, emancipation, social equality, domination, and social structure (McKernan, 2013; Maboya, 2014; and Pearson, 2016).

The Frankfurt school was established under the leadership of Hermann Weil between the years 1929 and 1930 and it also contributed to the development of CER as it comprised a group of researchers that showed an interest in the application of Marxism essentially as an interdisciplinary social theory in their inquiries (Vinz, 2016; Roggerone, 2018; Giroux, 2020). This Frankfurt school of social research was formed based on the history of the philosophy of social science because it enabled the understanding of the combination of social science and natural science philosophies (Curpas, 2013; Nkoane, 2013; Dube, 2016; de Barros, 2020). Other researchers agree with the above view and position their thought and support towards the assumption of CER as proposed by Weil (Demirović, 2013; Wellmer, 2014; Chidarikire, 2017 & Giroux, 2020). These scholars argue that CER embraces the three crucial components of practice, explanation, and the normative aspect to find out if the researched issue is related to the misuse of power, or to any form of oppression and exclusion and to deal with it accordingly.

This suggests that the CER theory empowers and liberates people from their challenges. McKernan (2013); Maboya (2014) and Pearson (2016) hold the same view that CER theory aims at emancipating and liberating human beings from the circumstances which enslave them



through many forms of oppression and social injustice. The origin of CER contributes then to its evolution and application as a theoretical framework in the field of social science research.

### **2.2.1.2 The advancement of CER**

The advancement of CER can be traced from the theoretical difficulties that occurred in the examination of paradigmatic efforts of Marx's *Das Kapital* (published between 1867 and 1883) which was followed by the Frankfurt school movement between 1920 and 1950 and finally with Habermas' theory of communicative action of 1982 (Pearson, 2016; Vinz, 2016; Roggerone, 2018). This advancement of CER began under Marx's historical materialism which significantly used the social sciences as the means of unifying practical and political issues. They did not want to reduce democratic politics to the people of their community (Darder, 2015; Kramer-Roy, 2015; Noel, 2016; Giroux, 2020). The second phase reveals the different periods of the Frankfurt school movements which sought theory without success before they declared social science as central to their movement in the late 1940s.

This second phase also showed a revolution in the thinking of the Frankfurt school, which started in the 1920s and lasted until the 1950s when most of the members who had joined the first era and remained until the third era and felt that the Jews were more concerned with the political issues rather than with social justice (Roggerone, 2018; Giroux, 2020). Meanwhile, in 2017 scholars like Chidarikire, Masimanga and Mokotjo contended that these first three eras of the Frankfurt school movement were deeply rooted in politics and were regarded as left-wing movements because the school was persecuted by the Hitler political leadership which mainly focused on political parties and systems.

Moreover, around 1950 when the movement went back to Germany from America, the two critical members, namely Horkheimer and Adorno together developed a new ideology of the CER theory and they critiqued the social sciences and the use of theories in administering society (Kemmis, 2006; Pearson, 2016; Roggerone, 2018). To conceptualise the evolution of CER under the era of the Frankfurt school movements, Britain (2014) and Noel (2016) both infer that the interdisciplinary study of the social sciences enforced by the Frankfurt school combined different disciplines like economics, sociology, philosophy and psychology and it tended to expand the scope of emancipation by bringing into consideration the issues of power, status, and equality of people. Furthermore, they were able to deal with the psycho-social issues

that significantly impacted people's lives (Britain, 2014; Noel, 2016 & de Barros, 2020). This supports studies which reveal that philosophers under the Frankfurt school critically paved the way for the evolution of CER by presenting the most progressive phases of enlightenment in their movements as social critics (Dube, 2016; Masimanga, 2017 & Roggerone, 2018).

Consequently, the evolution of CER led to the interdisciplinary study of society in which scholars incorporated and focused on various issues such as feminism, race, social justice, and the emancipation of society (Fook, 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018). Therefore, in the late 1950s new scholars emerged to enhance the CER theory and developed it to become the theory of transforming society (Britain, 2012; Demorovic, 2013, Mokotjo, 2017). The study by Andrew and Baker (2020) puts forward the view that CER was developed in Europe to promote the principle of emancipation of oppressed people through the provision of rational organisation in all aspects of social relations. This is because these rational movements were organised in such a way that all people were empowered to participate actively in constructing and shaping their world as a whole through their own rationality (Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Star, 2019). The next section elaborates on Habermas's concept of emancipation and communicative action. Habermas was regarded as one of the scholars who transformed CER into becoming a theoretical framework (Kemmis, 2006; Nkoane, 2012; Gordon, 2013; Darder, 2015; Masimanga, 2017).

### **2.2.1.3 Habermas's Concept of Communicative Action**

Jurgen Habermas was a German philosopher and sociologist who was born on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1929 in Dusseldorf, Germany and he is considered the most significant German philosopher of the past decades (Baxter, 1987 & de Barros, 2020). Furthermore, he is also known as an academic who was systematically engrossed in the beliefs of philosophers and social scientists who were there before him and for extensively applying sociology and Anglo-American philosophy in his work (Humphries, 1997 & Bolton, 2005). On the other hand, some scholars claim that Habermas's ideology is embedded in the tradition of German thought from Emmanuel Kant to the Marxists, and that it is associated with some of the Frankfurt School critical theorists who established the study of power relations and of the liberation of people (Pearson, 2016; Dube & Hlalele, 2018).

Significantly, Habermas's works mainly focus on democracy, rule of law, and the emancipation of human beings in modern society in the late 1980s. This view is supported by the scholars who claim that Habermas intended to emancipate individuals in their work institutions by limiting the structures that deliberately pursue irrational interests (How, 2003; Chidarikire, 2017 & Starr, 2019). In his first and enduring book known as *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* which was written in 1989, Habermas largely focused on the practical domain that identifies human social interactions in public institutions (Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Giroux, 2020). According to Habermas, communicative action in public institutions is governed by binding consensual norms, peoples' history, and social practices which define reciprocal expectations of members in that institution. (Habermas, 1992; Kramer-Roy, 2015; Fook, 2017).

With regard to emancipatory knowledge, some scholars argue that Habermas added a new dimension to the Frankfurt school by concentrating on the amelioration of the suffering of people (Pearson, 2016; Masimanga, 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018). In his work, Habermas also insisted on the emancipation of self-reflection or self-knowledge which involves an interest in one's history, and one's roles and expectations (Fook, 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018). The above views of Habermas correspond with the aim of this study which explores the understanding of learner integration from different perspectives and the diverse ways learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school and the ways in which learner integration could be enhanced to enable effective teaching and learning.

Moreover, employing CER as the theoretical framework and adopting the participatory action research design for this study also supported Habermas' ideology which is evidenced in some research that revealed that the Habermas and other scholars like Kurt Lewin significantly developed the educational action research methodology in order to transform the consciousness of American people by involving them in various freedom movements (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990; Young, 1990; Kemmis, 2006; Noel, 2016). Accordingly, some researchers mention that an action research should be considered when the study concerns social transformation (Pais & Costa, 2020).

Under the guidance of CER as the theoretical framework as well as by adopting the participatory action research, the issue of social injustice, power relationships, discrimination, and oppression affecting learner integration in schools this study was used to transform and

emancipate stakeholders within the selected Ex-Model C school from their previous education policies and programs that were still in use. Habermas (1992) in his theory maintains that CER aims to bring emancipation to human beings by recognising their perspectives and their self-awareness. Recent studies allude that emancipatory and participatory research is devoted to empowering the oppressed people by using a variety of methods which included self-direction, cooperation, and appropriate education in order to help them to pursue their own goals (Seedat, Suffla & Christie, 2017; Macrine, 2020). The next section elaborates on the CER as the theoretical framework for this study.

#### **2.2.1.4 The Critical Emancipatory Theory (CER)**

This section gives the reader a comprehensive analysis of using CER as the theoretical framework for this study. I begin by defining the word theory, the theoretical framework, and the use of CER as the basis of this research. Furthermore, this chapter discusses how and why the CER framework is essential in exploring the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school over other emancipatory frameworks.

This was attempted by interrogating and exploring the ways in which learner integration can be enhanced by the different stakeholders within the selected Ex-Model C School. A considerable body of research conducted in Thailand and Korea identified that learner integration is a complex phenomenon that it is influenced by many issues such as a sense of belonging, the learning experiences, and the well-being of the people researched (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014; Bianco & Slaughter, 2016). Therefore, it is important for the researcher and co-researchers to work together as a team to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and to find out “how they could deal with the issue of lack of learner integration confronting them in the defined context” (Bianco & Slaughter, 2016).

CER as a theoretical framework is defined as a set of critical and transformative ideas which has its roots in critical theory (CT) (Humphries, 1997; Maboya, 2014; Kramer-Roy, 2015; Msimanga, 2017; Pearson, 2017). Practically, CER is not like other traditional theories of educational research that are concerned with investigating, explaining and understanding what is happening within the research site (Gilani-Wiliams, 2014; Omodan, 2019). Rather, it is confirmed that CER tends to go further than the discussion and investigation of traditional theories by critiquing and seeking to make supportive changes to the situation (Casanave & Li,

2015). Similarly, other studies noted that CER is a theoretical framework that came to challenge the conservative methods of constructing knowledge in the educational research process (Behar-Horenstein & Feng, 2015; de Barros, 2020).

Furthermore, in most educational research, CER is employed as a theoretical framework to promote the principle of recognition which is a very important feature in attaining social justice (Braun et al., 2013; Nkoane, 2013; Manual, 2016; Alston & Bowles, 2019). CER is the approach that guides the researcher to recognise everyone involved in the research by making sure that each of the co-researchers is fully and actively engaged throughout the research process. Therefore, in 2016 research done by Dube, Jacobs and Moleko highlights that recognising the principle of CER in educational research not only influences the emancipation of the people but also improves the people's well-being, and it promotes social justice. In addition, scholars like Parker (2019) concur with them and assert that CER's principle of recognition guides the researcher to have respect for all their co-researchers by recognising their abilities and encouraging their participation in the investigation of the phenomenon researched.

In educational research, CER has the tendency to link with CTs' epistemological assumptions which indicate that there is no objective knowledge (Pearson, 2017; Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Roggerone, 2018). CER is seen as the theoretical framework that allows people's voices to be heard and valued. Hence, employing CER in this study enabled me to value and respect my co-researchers' perspectives and opinions toward the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Maseko (2017) and Seedat et al., (2017) concur by saying that CER and other emancipatory frameworks are essential theories for educational research because they eliminate the factors that will make the oppressed people or minority to remain marginalised or voiceless.

Similarly, to other emancipatory theoretical frameworks like racial emancipatory research, CER also contributes to the transformation of human lives (James, 2019 & Parker, 2019). Andrew and Baker (2020) together with Phelps-Ward (2020) are of the view that the transformative agenda encouraged by CER in action research is generated from two critical grounds, namely (i) to create the competencies of the co-researchers within the research site and (ii) for the researcher to consider the general action research competencies from other

similar problematic conditions sometimes present even in a broader context. CER diminishes the challenges or issues found in the educational site and in social injustice by respecting and listening to the co-researchers' views, experiences, perspectives, voices, and opinions as well as by empowering people to be free from their undesirable circumstances (Dube, 2016; Msimanga, 2017; Winarti, 2018).

Moreover, CER as a theoretical framework creates a level of transparency because it is a perspective that provides the researcher and co-researchers with an awareness of the assumptions and biases related to the research problem (Nilsen, 2015; Noel, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017; Omodan, 2019). It was mentioned that the CER theoretical framework seeks human emancipation that related to liberation of human beings from the circumstances that enslave them (Maseko, 2017). In addition to that some research supported and noted that the emancipation agenda of CER has become vital to the extent that it is viewed as the same as empowerment (Sudan & Zuin, 2018). This is because CER does not support the idea of a one-sided research process in which the researcher is seen as the main actor in the whole research process; rather it encourages the active involvement of everyone involved in the research process (Fook, 2017; Maseko, 2017; Roggerone, 2018).

In some studies, CER is seen as a theoretical framework that promotes teamwork and that fits well with the PAR research design. CER as a theoretical framework is associated with many social movements that identify the different forms of domination, social injustice, and inequality of human beings in societies (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Huber, 2020). This suggests that employing CER as the theoretical framework for this study aligns with the purpose of this study which is to research on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Some scholars affirm that CER has an engaging nature that plays a crucial role in allowing the co-researchers to engage actively in the research process through multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice sessions (Parker, 2019; Pais & Costa, 2020).

This study employed CER as the theoretical framework to guide and frame it based on the following reasoning: first, it involves the phenomenon of "learner integration" which is complex (Bianco & Slaughter, 2016, p. 87); second, the purpose of the study is to explore the understanding and enhancing process of learner integration and last, it seeks to empower and

emancipate the co-researchers through their active engagement, collaboration, and participation throughout the research process. These three reasons respond to the findings of the studies that found that CER is a theoretical framework that has no single actor in its engaging nature of the operation (Mokotjo, 2017; Dube & Hlalele, 2018). During the research process, the researcher and co-researchers worked in collaboration and their social interaction was free and fair as they planned, organised, and decided on activities together and ensured that everyone's voice and inputs were valued and heard. However, this study was guided by the sense of empowerment whereby each person involved was granted the freedom of expression and equal participation. In addition, all the practices and activities were open and interactive which helped the researcher to gaining new knowledge and a range of skills and values from one another. In the next section, the assumptions of the CER theoretical framework are discussed.

#### **2.2.1.5 Assumptions of CER**

CER as a theoretical framework emerged as a response to a growing discomfort such as participants becoming passive within the dominant research theories and paradigms in educational research (Noel, 2016; Seedat et al., 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018; Walus, 2019). Meanwhile, some studies assert that CER is a theoretical framework that seeks the abolition of social injustices (Kramer-Roy, 2015). This is because, in most educational research, justice is viewed as a necessary and indispensable issue. Furthermore, CER is also identified as a theoretical framework that aligns with the emancipatory paradigm's intention to bring social change, social transformation, and freedom to the people in the society (Ramirez, Quintana, Sanhueza & Valenzuela, 2013; Gilani-Wiliams, 2014; Imenda, 2014). CER tends to accomplish these agendas through its four basic assumptions namely ontology, epistemology, axiology, and logic as explained below.

- **The nature of reality in CER**

Another name for the nature of reality is ontology. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define ontology as the study of reality and being. In addition, Hutton and Heath (2020) maintain that ontology is an inquiry that deals with the nature of reality. Therefore, in the CER theoretical framework, realities are believed to be inappropriate in most societies, because they are created to serve certain people's interests (Nkoane, 2013; Imenda, 2014; Moleko, 2016; Maseko,

2017). This view is concurred with by Noel (2016, p. 14) who also claims that “since CER has multiple realities, therefore, knowledge and understanding should be created on a subjective basis.” Kitchel and Ball (2014) claimed that the nature of reality in CER can be well understood in the context of empowerment and emancipation of people in education sites, Casavane and Li (2015) contend that CER also considers social justice as a pillar for eliminating false realities in educational institutions. Masimanga (2017) believes that CER’s democratic process of creating social and political realities is influenced by social justice, emancipation, and critical self-reflection.

A considerable body of literature (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Sudan & Zuin, 2018) advocates that the researcher should empower their co-researchers in order to construct their own understanding of the phenomenon and to see the reality of it without any constraints or intervention from the researcher. Darder (2015) argues that realities are vital in emancipating people and in the advancement of a democratic society. This implies that educational institutions and society at large at all levels should ensure that people’s opinions and views are considered relevant in decision-making.

Moreover, it is paramount that all the co-researchers are empowered so they can develop a sense of ownership and feel that they are professionals because in reality the CER framework does not only focus on the improvement and transformation of the situations in the research sites but also change the systems of the organisation itself (Hlalele, 2014; Manual, 2016; Fook, 2017). This study agrees with Kramer-Roy (2015) and Sudan and Zuin (2018) who maintain that the CER framework sets co-researchers free from any form of constraint which in turn improves their understanding and empowerment and enhances their engagement with and participation in the organisation.

- **Knowledge construction in CER**

Epistemology is an inquiry concerned with how knowledge is constructed, attained, and transmitted (Patton, 2016; Flick, 2018). In the CER theoretical framework, epistemology, which is also known as the theory of knowledge, is a major component that brings about changes and equality in society (Braun et al., 2013; Maboya; 2014; Nilsen, 2015). Some scholars also suggest that the construction of knowledge is seen as a critical means to construct social and political realities in society (Padgett, 2016; Cohen, Manion & Marisson, 2018). This



suggests that the process of constructing knowledge and understanding should be free from any form of intellectual traits, and spiritual or moral restraints. Knowledge is seen as emancipatory in CER because it is constructed and acquired so as to bring about social justice (Nkoane, 2012; Noel, 2016; Giroux, 2020). However, Noel (2016), Masimanga (2017) and Alston and Bowles (2019) reveal that in CER knowledge is subjective and should be constructed subjectively. Therefore, this study is guided by the epistemological assumption of CER which is employed to identify and shape people's diverse views and knowledge of learner integration.

In accordance, some studies highlighted that knowledge formed using action research is seen as significant because it liberates people from themselves and from different types of domination (Gilani-Wilams, 2014 & Seedat et al., 2017). In this study, the concept of 'emancipation' was promoted by actively engaging and involving my co-researchers throughout the research process. This approach is supported by Hlalele (2014) who affirms that knowledge in CER is generated by manipulating power relations. Accordingly, the minority got an opportunity to engage with people in power so as to make decisions and address the challenges they face in society.

Nkoane (2012) and Imenda (2014) claim that CER enables researchers to construct valuable and helpful knowledge that influences critical discussion, and it considers different perspectives, opinions, and suggestions from co-researchers. This view corresponds to the studies by Wellmer (2014) and Moleko (2016) which found that CER has an engaging nature that allows full involvement and active participation of co-researchers for multiple perspectives to be considered. In this study, the researcher and co-researchers constructed knowledge through their various understandings and enhancements of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school by actively participating throughout the research process.

It is argued that in the CER employing open-ended research questions is vital in constructing knowledge because it advances the co-researchers' level of participation, commitment and self-reflection (Walter, 2017 & Parker, 2019). It was mentioned that an open-ended question is essential in constructing knowledge because co-researchers are motivated to talk more and share more information when they responded to open-ended questions (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). This implies that CER is the theory that emphasises equality as knowledge is constructed based

on the equal position and responsibility existing between the researcher and co-researchers in the study. The next section discusses the axiological assumption of CER.

- **Axiological aspect in CER**

Logic is defined as an inquiry that deals with a reasonable way of thinking (Punch, 2013; Flick, 2018). Flick (2018, p. 18) describes logic as “how people construct their understanding about certain things or issues”. Roggerone (2018) also stipulates that the aspect of reasoning (logic) in CER views the co-researchers as accountable in the research process as well as having rights that are equal to those of the researcher. Drawing from the logical assumptions of the CER which emphasise equal opportunity and an active role for both the researcher and co-researchers so as to construct reasonable knowledge which is helpful for both (Manual, 2016; Huber, 2020; Macrine, 2020). In addition, knowledge and understanding of the CER’s theoretical framework are not produced exclusively by the researcher, rather, they are created in a collaborative manner between the researcher and co-researchers. Some researchers remark that there is no hierarchy between the researcher and co-researchers in the process of knowledge construction in the CER framework (Winarti, 2018 & James, 2019).

It is argued that CER theoretical framework is seems to seek to generate the understanding and alternative skills and knowledge which are shaped by social interest, democracy, and emancipation (Omodan, 2019). Hence, it is important for the co-researchers to be empowered because it will help them to identify their fears and also be able to deal with them (Hlalele, 2014). It was mentioned that the highest empowerment results in the highest benefit of constructing knowledge that is relevant to a variety of interests (Wellmer; 2014; Jacobs, 2016). Some scholars in 2017 agreed that in order to generate knowledge and understanding using CER theoretical framework, the researcher must collaborate with the co-researchers and they must have equal opportunities and participation throughout the research process (Chidarikire, 2017 & Mokotjo, 2017). In this study, the researcher and co-researchers worked collaboratively and shared ideas and information. In addition, the study ensured that the concept of empowerment and active participation was the key element in constructing their knowledge concerning the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The next section discusses values in CER.

- **Values and ethics in CER**

Axiology can be explained as the study of values and things that are valuable. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Flick (2018) also describe axiology as an inquiry that deals with the issues of ethics and values. Dube (2016) claims that the axiological assumptions of CER are derived from it being seen as a guiding force for theorising philosophies and research decisions. Darder (2015) argues that the axiological assumptions of CER emphasise the recognition of the social and political reality of the co-researchers, their cognitive and psychological states as well as their morals and values. Meanwhile, CohenMiller and Pate (2019) indicate that CER places more importance on the transparency and interchange of discussions. This implies that using CER enabled the researcher and co-researchers to discuss and exchange views as well as to comprehend, respect, and value themselves as a heterogeneous group of people working together to achieve a particular goal or aim.

Cohen, Manion, and Marisson (2013) with Gajjar (2013) also note that it is important for the researcher and co-researchers to ensure that they respect and value each other's opinions and perspectives and challenge the status quo within acceptable ethical considerations so that the research findings become relevant. This means the research should benefit both the researcher and co-researchers so as to develop their knowledge, skills and self-sufficiency. Employing CER in this study ensured that all ethical considerations were adhered to by seeking and getting permission to conduct research in the selected school from the Department of Education as well as by getting the ethical clearance for this study from the University Ethics Committee (see Appendices A & B). I also sent and got permission from the gatekeeper of the selected school, the principal, to conduct research, and consent letters were also given to and collected from all the co-researchers who participated in the study (see Appendices C, D & E). The study also ensured against maleficence, whilst promoting beneficence and anonymity of all the co-researchers and also that it complied with all ethical issues during the research process.

## **2.3 PRINCIPLES OF CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH**

The intention of this section is to ground the reader in the principles of CER, and to show how they allowed this study to achieve its aims. In addition, CER theory suggests that it is important for a critical researcher to ground his or her study within these principles so as to be able to reform, restructure and transform the fundamental characteristics and features of the research

context (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018; Phelps-Ward, 2020). The CER's principle of promoting social justice is discussed below.

### **2.3.1 CER's principle of promoting social justice**

Globally, education is seen as the most important element for equalising human beings, and this makes the social justice pedagogy seek equality in the distribution of education in the community and in society (Nilsen, 2015; Manual, 2016; Fook, 2017; Walus, 2019). It is argued that social justice is concerned with the quality and equality of education distribution as well as the nature of the services and consequences for society through time (Connell, 2012). Social justice has become an imperative notion in education, especially in educational systems that have a history of discrimination and oppression (Pearson, 2016). This implies that it is important to consider the background of each learner in the school so as to practise just and unbiased social justice. Sudan and Zuin (2018) state that social justice focuses on democracy and on freedom in recognising the learners' full humanity in educational contexts. Some recent studies claim that the promotion of social justice requires the cooperation and involvement of every individual in society to build inherent human dignity and to establish an impartial and democratic society (Winarti, 2018; Omodan, 2019 & Hutton & Heath, 2020). This supports the statement that the study that is grounded in the CER theoretical framework is in the quest of reforming and transforming conflicting views and efforts in order to reveal the hidden political agenda in the research context (Gordon, 2013; Imenda, 2014 & Walter, 2017).

With this in mind, I contend that the principle of social justice manifests itself in bringing equality to people and their development. It is also believed that social justice maintains a particular focus on the critical pedagogy and the principle of actively engaging people with active voice and dialogues. Some studies affirm that active participation and involvement in CER is a tool that helps people to intervene in reforming all forms and practices of social injustice in society (Noel, 2016 & Starr, 2019). Politically and socially the CER theoretical framework seeks to abolish social injustice (Darder, 2015).

This study employed CER as its theoretical framework and based all its discussions and arguments on its principles and drew on the principle of social justice which was used to empower the co-researchers as they articulated and expressed the challenges they experienced due to ineffective learner integration in their school. As evidenced in some of the studies that

CER is used to enforce the promotion of social justice through the active participation of all co-researchers (Manual, 2016 & Parker, 2019), it is argued that employing participatory action research empowers co-researchers to freely explore the phenomenon so as to identify various forms of imbalances and inequalities in the research context (Maseko, 2017 & Seedat et al., 2017).`

Therefore, this study responds to the CER's principle of promoting social justice by empowering the co-researchers through active participation and involvement throughout the research process. Additionally, the CER theoretical framework enabled me as the researcher to treat both minor co-researchers (learners) and adult co-researchers equally without discrimination. The whole research process was characterised by respect, healthy power relationships, and consideration of each co-researcher's views regardless of their age, race, gender or status. Thus, I contend that the principle of promoting social justice was fairly demystified throughout this study. Some scholars affirm that the critical researcher needs to ensure that every co-researcher has equal opportunity in the research process to face the realities and to be able to transform their societies (Masimanga, 2017; Parker, 2019).

In 2017 scholars like Chidarikire, Fook and Walter highlight that active participation helps co-researchers to transform the way they think about themselves, and it increases their ability to act as professionals. Therefore, through the CER principle of social justice the co-researchers were empowered to articulate their understandings of learner integration critically and they were also able to examine ways in which they believe learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school can be enhanced. This also agreed with studies which maintain that CER promotes the principle of social justice in order to ensure the equality of all the members of the society regardless of their race, status or ethnic group so they can attain freedom, hope, peace, equity and social justice in all its forms (Dube, 2016 & James, 2019).

Moreover, some studies claim that the CER principle of social justice breaks all cultural, gender, racial, economic and other forms of social injustice by providing equal treatment and active participation for all co-researchers involved in the research process (Hutton & Heath, 2020). This suggests that the principle of social justice allows the co-researchers to experience a higher level of freedom, peace, and transparency throughout the research process. More importantly, it enabled the co-researchers in this study to take full control of the research

process by empowering them to explore the research context and to examine the situations, practices, and programs which enabled their respective contributions and participation. The next section discusses the second principle which is known as the principle of emancipation.

### **2.3.2 CER's principle of emancipation**

The principle of emancipation is another agenda of CER which intentionally emphasises the liberation of marginalised people by viewing them as important and allowing their voices to be heard (Wellmer, 2014; Jacobs, 2016; Hooley et al., 2018). Some of critical studies claim that the CER's principle of emancipation allows people of different backgrounds and different status to work together under the protection of freedom and empowerment (Roggerone, 2018; CohenMiller & Pate, 2019). This supports the principle of emancipation that comes within the context where there are various forms of domination. Based on this, it is argued that the dominant group normally holds the power to make their interests mainstream and unquestionable and these must be followed by the majority (Dube, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017; Hutton & Heath, 2020).

The CER's principle of emancipation is viewed as "acts of domination that should be eliminated from people's lives" (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018, p. 87). This domination tendency was rejected by scholars in 2017 who indicated that domination acts should be prohibited because they distort people's potential and identities (Chidarikire, 2017 & Mokotjo, 2017). Based on the preceding discussions on domination tendency in our societies, I argue that based on the principle of emancipation, the CER theoretical framework tends to release the dominated in society to be free and able to practise their potential without prohibiting circumstances that seem to favour only the interests of the dominant group.

In educational sites, the CER principle of emancipation encourages enabling practices and approaches which aim at freeing learners from any oppressive practices. Furthermore, it is pointed out that the main aim of the emancipation principle is not only to liberate and to organise our society in collaborative ways but also to create an impartial unprejudiced living style in our societies (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018). This view was supported by Mokotjo (2017, p. 44) who affirms that "CER's emancipation agenda focuses mainly on the analysis of oppressive practices, structures, and philosophies which enslave people in the society". As a matter of fact, the emancipation principles have a tendency to empower and liberate the

marginalised and oppressed people and to help them achieve their sense of belonging and humanity (Fook, 2017; Masimanga, 2017; Walter, 2017).

Drawing from the above discussions, this study has revealed that the emancipation principle enabled the co-researchers to become empowered and also provided them with knowledge, understanding, and dense information regarding the phenomenon of learner integration and ways, it could be enhanced in the selected Ex-Model C School. Some recent studies explained that the CER's emancipation agenda offers the co-researchers an opportunity and the ability to study their challenges in the research context, understand them, and be able to take appropriate actions to solve them (Walter, 2017; Parker, 2019). In this study, this principle granted my co-researchers an opportunity to reflect on the whole research process and on the phenomenon of learner integration within the Ex-Model C school and encouraged them to suggest the best possible solution to include everyone in the school's practices and programs that led to an effective implementation of learner integration in this Ex-Model C school.

A considerable body of research has also revealed that the emancipation principle of CER tends to engage all co-researchers, especially the marginalised and oppressed ones, to be involved in decision-making on the issues that are related to them (Huber 2020; Macrine, 2020). This study supports this because the emancipation principle not only prevented the co-researchers of this study from being prejudiced in the research process but also it provided them with the freedom and power to share their ideas, perspectives and experiences on the phenomenon being researched. It is agreed by some studies that the emancipation principle intends to liberate the minority that has been deprived of the right to expression and participation in their community (Hooley et al., 2018; Hutton & Heath, 2020). I contend that CER's emancipation agenda is inevitably in a critical study aimed at proposing ways that people can use to liberate and empower themselves. Thus, the co-researchers in this study were emancipated by granting them an opportunity to engage actively in sharing their understanding of learner integration and be able to suggest different ways in which it can be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school.

Based on the above and drawing from the guidance of the emancipation principle in this study, all the co-researchers were treated in equal and respectful ways, and more importantly, their inputs were considered without any prejudice. In addition, this principle also granted the co-

researchers an opportunity to transform the inherited Apartheid values and norms in the selected Ex-Model C School by transform them so as to promote inclusivity and accommodate every learner within the educational setting. The next section discusses the CER's principle of transformation.

### **2.3.3 The CER's principle of transformation**

In essence, the CER has a transformation agenda that seeks to raise the consciousness of individuals on the issues of power, oppression, discrimination and social injustices that need to be addressed in their society (Fujino et al., 2018). The body of knowledge also agreed that CER's principle of transformation seeks clarity on the current state of political and social issues that impact negatively on people's lives and seeks further to transform them into better ones (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018). This means that CER theory complements its transformation agenda by placing more emphasis on issues such as restructuring of social and political powers, as well as on empowering and emancipating of the marginalised. It is argued that the transformation agenda of CER can be successfully observed by ensuring the emancipation, empowerment, transparency, and social justice of people within the society which turned the CER to be transformative in nature (Walus, 2019; Giroux, 2020)

Meanwhile, the increase in the demand for a multicultural learning environment led to the emergence of the CER's transformation principle which is seen as a counter theme and as the best idea for acknowledging the social construction of cultural and social identities in schools and in other educational institutions (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018; Parker, 2019; Starr, 2019). For instance, the intention of the transformation principle is to understand and recognise cultural differences in educational institutions. It is believed that the transformation principle is not only bound to human relationships and their thinking of cultural understanding but also it gives emphasis to cultural acceptance where people's behaviour is externally directed (Moleko, 2016, James, 2019).

Some studies contend that the main focus of the transformation principle in selected educational research is to engage with the existing inherent issues in the mainstream so as to meet the multicultural educational goals (Dube & Hlalele, 2018 & Walus, 2019). Therefore, in this study, I have conceptualised the CER theoretical framework to transform the inherent condition of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school by modifying the previous



educational practices, culture, and programs that seemed to be oriented towards only one culture. The implementation of the transformation principle enabled the researcher and co-researchers of this study to become aware of their social, moral and psychological values which influence the integration issue in a selected Ex-Model C school. Hence, all the comprehension and discussion were guided by the transformative agenda which could result in logical changes in some of the practices, programs, and structures in the research context. This is supported by studies which reveal that the concern of the transformation principle is to recognise, listen to, question and promote critical thinking in the researcher and co-researchers (Fujino et al., 2018; Hooley et al., (2018); Alston & Bowles, 2019).

Therefore, the transformative ideas, experiences, and perceptions presented in this study were shaped by the co-researchers' interests. As a critical researcher, my interest was to support, motivate and encourage the co-researchers to engage in a purposeful and emancipatory interaction and participation throughout the study. It is equally important to note that the CER's transformation principle helped me to minimise the potential of the minority of co-researchers (learners) remaining marginalised or voiceless by encouraging and offering them the opportunity to become actively involved in every learning activity. Thus, all the co-researchers were able to contribute their inputs on the researched phenomenon by being able to explore their understandings and ways to enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The next section discusses the CER's principle of improving human lives.

#### **2.3.4 The CER's principle of improving human lives**

Improving human lives is regarded as another agenda reflected in the CER theoretical framework. According to Alvarez-Blanco and Torres (2018), CER is a theory that aims to improve the living conditions of people in society. This implies that in order to understand the CERs' agenda of improving human lives, one needs to view it from the perspectives of the various research streams such as the transformative research stream, the feminist perspective, the critical research paradigm as well as from the participatory action research perspective (Noel, 2016; Masimanga, 2017; CohenMiller & Pate, 2019).

In most educational research it is shown that Habermas' concept of communicative action is conceptualised as a response to CER theory in resolving the growing discomfort of

sociocultural domination in educational institutions (Seedat et al., 2017; Hutton & Heath, 2020).

Regarding this, it is argued that the process of improving human lives under CER theory is “based on the principles of negotiation, empowerment, and reciprocity” (Roggerone, 2018, p. 49) which brings about people’s awareness of the social injustices and inequalities that are embedded in their societies. In addition, it implied that CER’s principle of improving human lives not only seeks to improve lives but also to inspect and understand the political and social practices that take place within the specific context as well as investigate how it impacts on people’s daily lives (Maboya, 2014; Noel, 2016 & Parker, 2019). Furthermore, improving human lives is the principle which is dialogic and it has a persuasive meaning and it is associated with coherent discussions and arguments of a variety of ideas whereby people use language to share their experiences and perceptions (Maseko, 2017; Walter, 2017; Hooley et al., 2018).

On the other hand, some research in 2019 noted that CER’s principle of improving human lives lays emphasis on the active participation and collaboration of all the people involved in the action research process (James, 2019; Parker, 2019; Starr, 2019). This will enable the co-researchers in selected action research to become empowered and enable them to conduct critical discussions in order to develop their awareness of the research context and of the phenomenon being investigated. In support, it is further argued that the CER’s principle of improving humanity empowers the co-researchers in any action research study to understand the political and sociocultural factors in the research context and to emancipate them by being fully involved in the processes and in improving such practices that have an impact on their lives in one way or another (Pearson, 2017).

Research in 2018 also revealed that the principle of improving human lives aims to involve the researcher and co-researchers in actively discussing the phenomenon collaboratively and to propose a possible alternative to address the research problems, rather than seeing the researcher as the main actor in the research process (Sudan & Zuin, 2018). While other studies indicated that the empowerment and active participation approaches are important in CER action research because they minimise the possibility for the co-researchers remaining marginalised and voiceless (Alston & Bowles, 2019). Moreover, some literature asserted that

the CER's principle of improving human lives empowers co-researchers to use language as a key element on the ground of sharing experiences, views and perceptions and that it allows co-researchers to play an active role in creating knowledge that would benefit them and their lives (Darder, 2015; Dube, 2016; Noel, 2106).

This study focuses on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, therefore, I contend that the CER's principle of improving human lives enabled me and the co-researchers to develop critical strategies in which learners could effectively be integrated into a selected Ex-Model C school. Again, the critical dialogue discussions with co-researchers during the process of this study also helped me to understand the research context as well as the different aspects of the socio-cultural practices taking place as well as their influence on learner integration.

Additionally, some scholars agreed that the goal of improving human lives is to bring empowerment and social transformation to the people in the society (Darder, 2015; Jacobs, 2016; Fook, 2017 & Mokotjo, 2017). Thus, this principle contributed significantly to the improvement of human lives in a selected Ex Model C school by ensuring that I and my co-researchers were able to replace some culturally oriented practices and programmes with integrative multicultural programmes and practices to accommodate everyone and to improve their wellbeing as well as the social and academic performance of the learners. The next section discusses the aims and objectives of the CER theoretical framework.

## **2.4 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CRITICAL EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH**

The study aims at researching on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. In order to achieve this aim, this study pursued the following objectives:

- To understand learner integration through the co-researchers' perspectives in a selected Ex-Model C school;
- To explore ways which could enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school; and

- To examine the need and importance for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

In response to the growing demand for a diverse learning environment in South African schools, especially those previously classified as one culture, this study used the CER theoretical framework and its principles to guide both the researcher and co-researchers throughout the research process. The CER theoretical framework seemed to be relevant to this study because it emphasises the emancipation tendency of any action research. Some studies noted that the aim of educational action research is to solve a particular problem that has been identified in the teaching and learning environment. The study used this theory to guide the researcher and co-researchers to explore and suggest some solutions on identified problems facing the learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The CER theoretical framework encourages collaboration, empowerment and active participation of the co-researchers (Curpas, 2013; Dube, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017). This suggests that the principles helped both the researcher and co-researchers of this study to recognise such phenomena as social injustice and inequality in the research context. This indicates that during the research process, as the researcher, I managed to consider all the contributions from co-researchers as important regardless of their age, race, gender or position in the school. In addition, to ensure the accuracy of data I also selected appropriate co-researchers, as well as the participatory data generation techniques which were used to emancipate and empower the co-researchers in order to explore and examine ways in which learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school.

Just like other educational research frameworks the CER theory also promotes equal opportunity for the researcher and co-researchers to participate in the research process. Masimanga (2017, p. 22) affirms that “CER theoretical framework gives the co-researchers equal chances to discuss and share their experiences on the phenomenon researched and actively engaged in the attempt to solve the problems that affect them”. In addition to that the CER theory also interprets action research as a process of constructing knowledge that benefits the marginalised and voiceless people in the society (Ramirez et al., 2013; Noel, 2016; Starr, 2019; Phelps-Ward, 2020). Therefore, I agree with these scholars that the democratic process of knowledge construction under CER theoretical framework promotes communicative

proficiency and mutual understanding of both the researcher and co-researchers who are investigating the phenomenon researched.

The principles of CER also transform the critical researcher from being the gatekeeper of research information or main actor of the research process into a “facilitator of the research process” (Pais & Costa, 2020, p. 22). Furthermore, this theory also empowers the co-researchers to take centre stage for critical reflection and their explanation of the research problem acts towards the elimination of such problems. To reiterate, this study discussed the main assumptions of the CER theory and mentioned that the CER theoretical framework emerged as a response to a growing discomfort within the dominant research paradigms and theories of educational research (Noel, 2016; Seedat et al., 2017; Person, 2017; Winarti, 2018). In most educational action research, scholars in 2020 maintained that the critical researcher conceptualises the CER theory so as to accomplish the main agendas of improvement and transformation of social and political situations in the educational sites (Giroux, 2020 & Macrine, 2020).

Research by Sudan and Zuin (2018) highlight three main aims and objectives of the CER theory which attempt to investigate the social and cultural aspects that have an impact on people and functions of the school or in any other educational institution. First, they argue that the CER theory has the emancipatory goals / objectives which seek to bring empowerment to marginalised and voiceless people in the school environment, by exposing unfavourable social and political issues in the schools. Further, the second objective of the CER theory is the promotion of democratic participation and emancipation. Indeed, CER encourages freedom and fair participation of all the co-researchers involved in the educational research process. Sudan and Zuin (2018, p. 24) affirm this by saying that “this minimises the potential for co-researchers to remain voiceless and marginalised”. In the same vein, Alston and Bowles (2019, p. 208) also highlight that “empowerment and active participation approach are inevitable for an action research grounded under the CER theory”. Last, Sudan and Zuin explained that the last objective of CER theory is to evaluate the political and social changes that take place in the educational sites as well as “to educate people on the effective ways to implement the changes so as to benefit everyone involved” (Sudan & Zuin, 2018, p. 29).

The aims and objectives of the CER theory highlighted in Sudan and Zuin (2018) align well with the aims and objectives of this study as discussed in Chapter One (see section 1.7) and in Chapter Two (Section 2.5). All the aims and objectives of this action research are secured under the CER perspective which intends to bring about a democratic, social and cultural change in a selected Ex-Model C school. I contend that CER is the theory that aimed to eradicate all forms of social injustice and inequality in educational contexts. It is argued that the CER framework is aimed at promoting the involvement of marginalised people to have equal opportunity in playing an active role in knowledge construction in their society (Pearson, 2017 & Phelps-Ward, 2020). In the same manner, other scholars also noted that the CER theory does not only aim to mitigate the negative aspects of some socio-cultural practices at the educational site but also to evaluate the historical of such practices (Fook, 2017; Hooley et al., 2018; Omodan, 2019).

The study argues that the CER theory in this study has helped me and the co-researchers gain awareness of all the fabricated social and cultural practices and false perceptions which hinder the emancipation, social justice and effective implementation of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Moreover, the co-researchers were empowered during the research process and I worked in collaboration with them throughout the research process to ensure that the emancipation of the ways for effective learner integration implementation were proposed by co-researchers of this study. During this study, my co-researchers and I grounded ourselves in the social and cultural aspects that were positively impacted by integrative programmes in the functioning of the school as well as by people within the learning environment. The next section explains the role of the researcher.

## **2.5 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

Employing the principle of the CER theoretical framework and PAR design to the framework of this study turned the role of the researcher from being the key role player in the research process into the facilitator of the research process. As the sharing of responsibilities between the researcher and co-researchers is enhanced. This is confirmed in the research which asserts that the researcher under CER theory is no longer a dominant player and in control, he or she is no longer the sole arbiter of what counts as knowledge (Pearson, 2017 & James, 2019).

It is also argued that an action research which is framed under the CER theory inclines to be emancipatory whereby the researcher has to ensure that the co-researchers do not remain marginalised or voiceless. In the same vein, some scholars advised that it is an ideal role for the critical researcher to encourage active participation, engagement and collaboration with co-researchers in finding the solutions to the research problems (Parker, 2019 & Walus, 2019). In 2020 some scholars also suggested that the role of the researcher in the CER theoretical framework is to act collaboratively with all the people involved in the research with the intention of empowering and liberating by transforming all the made-up beliefs, perceptions and practices so as to meet the people's real demands (Giroux, 2020; Phelps-Ward, 2020).

Therefore, this study concurs with Masimanga (2017) that the critical researcher who employed an interpretive-cum-critical perspective must make sure that all the perceptions, opinions and contributions of the co-researchers are valued and considered. This study also corresponds with the study by Walus (2019) claims that it is important for a critical researcher to encourage active participation and the involvement of co-researchers in critical and transformative discussions regarding the issue researched. This view is also supported by Giroux (2020) who notes that a sense of collaboration in a research process paves the way for empowerment, liberation and transformation of the research context in response to the peoples' demands based on their real lived experiences.

In the response to the PAR's phases (plan, action, observe and reflect) the research prescribed some investigation to explain that the role of the action researcher is to meet all the demands in each PAR phase so as to allow critical engagement in actions and activities (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2013; Kramer-Roy, 2015; Wessels & Wood, 2019). Hence, in the first phase of PAR which is to plan, the role of the researcher here is to engage himself or herself in a selected open dialogue and critical discussion with co-researchers on the phenomenon researched. The plan phase enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how the co-researchers interpret the phenomenon, and it enables him or her to clarify the plurality of meaning on the phenomenon (Algozzine & Hancock, 2017).

In the second phase of PAR, which is action, the role of the researcher is to enable the co-researchers to validate their claims regarding the phenomenon with a clear understanding of the reasons for taking such positions. It is argued that in the action phase the researcher needs

to step back and let the co-researchers take the stage for action (Kemmis et al., 2013). For the third phase of PAR, which is to observe, the role of the researcher and co-researchers is to see and note down their daily routines in the research context so as to see how the transformation and adjustment brought about by the action phase works (Dei, 2016). The fourth phase of PAR involves reflection. The role of the researcher in this phase is to encourage a critical dialogue among the co-researchers and to authenticate the claims made by them in their reflection on the whole research process. Maboya (2014); Gubrium and Harper (2016); and Chevalier and Buckles (2019) advised that the critical researcher must not be biased when interpreting the co-researchers' reflections.

Considering the CER principles and PAR design, this study leans towards the linear critical transformative motives which reduce the power of the researcher and increase the power of the co-researchers. This implies that during the research process this study valued the contributions of both the researcher and co-researchers equally. As affirmed by Chidarikire (2017) with the facilitator trait, the critical researcher tends to enable co-researchers to create and share knowledge rather than to impose it. The next section critically discusses the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers.

## **2.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND THE CO-RESEARCHERS**

In some of the theoretical frameworks employed in educational research the researcher is seen as a key player. In contrast, the CER theory made the researcher less dominant in the research process (Maboya, 2014; Pearson, 2017; Starr, 2019). Also, it is argued that the relationship between the researcher and co-researchers is a crucial component for the success of an action research with a transformation and emancipation agenda (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). On the one hand, CER is seen as a theoretical framework that ensures a relationship between the researcher and co-researchers by redefining emancipation and empowerment as central aspects of the research process (Giroux, 2020). This implies that it is important for every activity taking place in emancipatory action research to be grounded in democracy and in equity which should employ equal involvement of the researcher and co-researchers in order to realise the emancipatory intention.



Some scholars also suggested that the relationship between the researcher and co-researchers under the CER theoretical framework is to intentionally move away from the authority of a top-down relationship and to influence active engagement with the aims of empowering, liberating and transforming situations and conditions in the research context (Winarti, 2018 & James, 2019). This shows that CER theory underlines the collaborative relationship between the researcher and co-researcher where everyone is involved, and their perceptions are taken into consideration. Omodan (2019) argues that democracy in the research process can be achieved only if the collaboration is viewed as vital for the transformation and emancipation of all people. Andrew and Baker (2020) also contend that CER theory lays more focus on the communicative interaction between the researcher and co-researchers as both have commitment and responsibility for handling the research process and for ensuring the study is completed in a successful way.

This study supports Omodan's (2019) view that collaboration is the fundamental component in the relationship between the researcher and co-researchers. This is because the researcher is not the only knowledgeable person who can do the whole research and approve the research findings. Hence, during this study I and my co-researchers created some activities to develop our sense of ownership of the research process. This is demonstrated in the study by Kemmis et al. (2013) that shows that the CER theory led the co-researchers to own the research process through their own efforts.

Therefore, the collaborative relationship shared between the researcher and co-researchers was respected, as they were all seen as experts, and they played an energetic role in transforming the situation of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Furthermore, in this study, the power of emancipatory action research exists in all people involved. In a similar vein, some research found that a collaborative relationship encourages reciprocity by providing co-researchers with empowerment and self-confidence (Pearson, 2017). Based on this, I worked collaboratively with my co-researchers throughout the study process, and I also ensured that all of their views and perceptions were considered, and their voices were heard. It is also believed that the relationship between the researcher and co-researchers should be won through the communicative interaction and by making the research democratic (Andrew & Baker, 2020).

Thus, during this study my relationship with the co-researchers via communicative interaction was maintained and this enabled us to achieve the transformation and emancipation study agenda successfully in a selected Ex-Model C school. Moreover, drawing from the CER theoretical framework, the relationship that existed between the researcher and co-researchers invoked the full involvement of everyone from the beginning of the research process till the end so as to achieve an equal balance of power between the researcher and co-researchers (Nilsen, 2015; Dei, 2016; Wessels & Wood, 2019). To support this some studies assert that the co-researchers must be involved in their role as partners of the research and should be allowed to co-control the research process and to participate fully in decision-making (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Maseko, 2017; Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018).

Consequently, during this study both the researcher and co-researchers had an equal say in the decision-making process as they were fully involved in drawing up the findings of the study. Moleko (2016, p. 166) claims that “CER creates a bond between the researcher and co-researchers and puts them closer to each other”. This helped us during the process of the study as we managed to tap into each other’s capabilities and embrace them as valuable in making this study successful. This means that the theory tends to totally occupy the researcher and co-researchers of knowledge in the intellectual journey.

As a matter of fact, the CER theory advances the agenda of hope, freedom, peace, equity, and social justice in all its forms (Mokotjo, 2017; Zuber-Skerritt, 2018; Huber, 2020) and it helped this study to create a beneficial relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers by encouraging transparency and openness throughout the research process. The researcher promoted transparency by reviewing the transcripts with co-researchers. It is agreed that the critical researcher has to be patient, compassionate and mindful of the issues that the co-researchers are facing and also allow the co-researchers to tackle the situation by using their own appropriate and convenient ways (Dube, 2016 & Masimanga, 2017). Some recent studies also correspond with this view and advise that the researcher should develop a good research methodology that guides the co-researchers to construct knowledge that promotes care and safety for their livelihoods (Schouw, Mash & Kolbe-Alexander, 2018). So, employing the CER theory in this study allowed me (i) to develop a sense of unity and to be thoughtful; and (ii) to understand the real world of the co-researchers easily by respecting them and their awareness of constructing and executing their social lives. Therefore, by using this theory I was able to

value the diverse perceptions and thoughts of my co-researchers in creating an understanding of the phenomenon being researched.

The study by Schouw et al., (2018) also pointed out that emancipatory action research eliminates power inequalities and opens doors for active participation and involvement of all in the research process. Dube (2016, p. 244) also identifies “CER as a framework that dilutes power relations which have made the researchers victims in the research context as it does not respond to their lived realities”. Hence, drawing from the discussions above, the study reveals that using the CER theoretical framework enabled me and the co-researchers in this study to work together to transform the issues pertaining to the learner integration situation in a selected Ex-Model C school by creating a good and productive relationship that was guided by collaboration, democracy, and communicative interaction. The next section highlights my reflections on employing critical emancipation research (CER) as the theoretical framework for this study.

## **2.7 REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF CRITICAL EMANCIPATION RESEARCH**

This section focuses specifically on the use of Critical Emancipatory Research as a theoretical framework in educational research studies. Its potential strengths and shortcomings are discussed and evaluated as follows.

### **2.7.1 Strength of CER**

Some scholarly works provided strong justifications for the use of CER theory in educational research. They indicated that the CER theoretical framework leans towards challenging the conservative frameworks and methodologies used to construct knowledge in educational research (Behar-Horenstein & Feng, 2015; Zuber-Skerritt, 2018; Phelps-Ward, 2020). The claim put forward is that in order to find solutions to the challenges facing the educational systems, the research needs to be emancipatory in nature. Dube (2016, p. 49) concurs that “a critical researcher has to ground his or her study under the critical hermeneutics which are influenced by an emancipatory action research and critical action strategies”. Meanwhile, some scholars have argued that the CER framework is important because it is based on pluralism (Gottesman, 2016; Verovsek, 2018; Brown, 2020). Therefore, this theory also “inclines to minimise the possibilities of those who are a minority to remain marginalised or voiceless”

(Brown, 2020, p. 469). Additionally, the pluralist characteristic of CER theory shapes educational research to focus mainly on the critical comprehension of the co-researchers so as to prompt systematic changes that should lead to the transformation of structures, practices, and programs in the learning environment through active participation, collaboration and empowerment (Vinz, 2016; Hoggan, Malkki & Finnegan, 2017; Hooley et al., 2018). This notion is supported by researchers who pointed out that the CER theoretical framework supports purposeful and emancipatory interaction between the researcher and all the co-researchers involved in the research (Darder, 2015; Walter, 2017 & Ledwith, 2020).

CER is not regarded as a one-sided framework, whereby the researcher is the main actor in the data collection, analysis, and presentation. This also is confirmed in the studies which believe the CER theory creates a ground for social justice and emancipation where everyone involved improves their competencies related to the research phenomenon because of their active engagement and participation (Fook, 2017 & Winarti, 2018). Furthermore, the second strength of CER is seen as the transparency tendency which is “not often evident or required in other conventional frameworks” (Masimanga, 2017, p. 55). Therefore, through openness and transparency during the study, the CER theory provides the most operative and powerful means of producing better conditions within the research context. Lindahl (2020) affirms that the transparency and openness in CER transforms the incomplete consciousness of the researcher and co-researchers into a positive academic identity as both are required to achieve a strong voice in changing the educational systems.

In essence, this framework is aimed at providing strategies to challenge the socially oppressive structures and to promote democracy in society (Hoggan et al., 2017; Poster, 2019). CER is also seen as an ideal framework because it attempts to promote social justice throughout the research process. The CER theoretical framework changes critical qualitative educational research into a critical conversation regarding the promotion of social justice and the transformation of systems. This clearly suggests that every theory has its weakness or critiques that are associated with its application in research. Thus, the CER is not without its criticism. The next section discusses and identifies the drawbacks of using the CER theoretical framework in educational research.

### 2.7.2 Critiques of CER

Despite the many advantages that have been indicated for the use of CER as a theoretical framework in educational research, the theory tends to raise issues that reveal unfavourable aspects like power dominance, inequalities as well as rejections within the education and research contexts (Scotland, 2012; Demirović, 2013 & Noel, 2016), these scholars stating against the use of CER theory and criticise its application in educational research.

To understand the challenges of using CER as a theoretical framework some articles pointed out the pluralistic approach of CER as a major challenge when it comes to the concept of methodology choice. This is because data generated in the research tended to have multiple perspectives which resulted in the challenge of analysing it. This also responds to the study by which indicates that CER is a pluralistic approach that prohibits the researcher from engaging in a wide range of boundaries for research methodologies and pushes him or her to stick to a particular methodology to suit the study (Abdul Razzak, 2020). It is argued that the methodology is cooperative to minimise the risk of an introverted co-researcher not to remain silent in the research process. The researcher needs to create adjustable methods like one-to-one discussions so as to involve some of co-researchers who are not comfortable with the communicative interaction and other approaches that use pluralistic methods.

Another limitation of the CER theory is that it often labels the co-researchers as people belonging to a particular marginalised group” (Scotland, 2012, p. 14). This implies that this theory focuses only on the voiceless and marginalised people. Therefore, this also is viewed as a weakness of the theory as it is portraying the co-researcher as a sorrowful individual requiring compassion due to their suffering and unfavourable conditions. Some researchers affirmed that CER is a narrow lens of presenting the co-researcher (Mill, Allen & Morrow, 2016).

In addition to that, this belief brings up the question about the space of non-marginalised people in the context of the CER framework. As Scotland (2012, p. 14) argues that “CER does not recognise people with different status or backgrounds to be involved in the research process”. I contend that this is a major critique of CER theory which views each co-researcher as a marginalised person in society. Some research added that the CER theoretical framework does not cater to other co-researchers who are not marginalised (Klein, Huynh, 2004 & Mill et al., 2016). This clearly means that the researcher can become selective in choosing his or her

research participants when employing CER theory because he or she will be required to focus mainly on the marginalised co-researchers and exclude the rest which causes the theory to be specifically biased (Verovsek, 2018; Wessels & Wood, 2019).

Furthermore, the CER theory in some cases is seen as a threat to the political leaders in society because it emphasises radical changes to the structure of society as well as the removal of all forms of inequalities and domination in society. This is supported by the scholars who stated that the CER theory is a precarious movement for the ruling class that could lead to an unrest situation within the society (Abdul Razzak, 2020 & Brown, 2020). Meanwhile, another argument against the CER theoretical framework involves its ability to achieve its emancipation agenda. Some scholars argued that in most cases, educational research's phenomenon might appear as emancipatory but sometimes the researcher fails to bring emancipation into the research context (Wigger, 2016; Hoggan et al., 2017 & Gandhi (2019).

Likewise, another criticism of using CER as a theoretical framework is that researchers can be seen as experts in the research process because of their knowledge of the study, research claimed that it is possible for the researcher to hold authority during the research process because of his or her research membership status and for his or her familiarity with the phenomenon researched which is gained through the review of related literature and this might make the coresearchers feel inferior and to act as a threat to their colleagues (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). Hence, I support this claim because the co-researchers might feel inferior and doubtful of themselves when the researcher has more knowledge about the research study and the phenomenon researched.

Drawing from the critique against CER presented above, I contend that observance of the critical emancipatory action research ethics in the study helps to diminish the arguments against the use of the CER theoretical framework. Despite the limitations of the use of CER as a theoretical framework as cited above, I still contend that CER is an appropriate framework for this study because of its main focus which is to understand and enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The CER helped the study towards the transformation of practices and programmes within a research context that seems to uphold unjust treatment into a comprehensive, integrative and all-inclusive learning system. The next section discusses the justification for using CER as the theoretical framework to frame this study.

## **2.8 Justification for using CER as a theoretical framework to frame this study**

The focus of the study is to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. In order to achieve the aim this study utilised the CER's assumptions and principles to frame and accomplish the main agenda of enhancement and transformation of all the activities (such as learning, teaching and sociocultural activities) and practices taking place in a selected Ex-Model C school. This is discussed in detail in the following section provided below to justify the reason for the use of the CER theoretical framework in this study.

### **2.8.1 CER resonates with PAR and the interpretive-cum-critical paradigm**

I found that it was important to inform the reader of the relationship between PAR research design and the critical paradigm used to frame this study. For instance, the research by Chevalier and Buckles (2019) concludes that critical participatory action research in social science has a tendency to advance the humanistic perspective which emphasises social knowledge construction. Moreover, some scholars agreed that in CER theory there is a paradigm shift from the researcher being a conventional central figure in the research to becoming one that seeks to promote cooperative research ownership (Hlalele, 2014; Brynskov & Foth, 2016). It is proposed that the critical paradigm incorporates the view of historical realism that reality is shaped by political, social, economic, ethnic, gender and cultural values and serves a certain group of people in the society (Guba & Lincon, 1994). Hence, "they are seen as deceitful realities" (Janes, 2016, p. 110). However, the PAR's principle of cooperative research ownership turns the critical participatory action research into something more inclusionary in nature which also complements the agenda of CER theory with its tendency towards emancipation and empowerment.

Critical participatory action research was motivated by emancipation and liberation purposes to create ethical questions to address the hidden forms of control, domination, and exploitation in society (Mill et al., 2016; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Starr, 2019). This shows that PAR and the critical paradigm have a habit of developing a study that focuses mainly on the critique and transformation of social and political structures in society.

Moleko (2016, p. 19) argues that the "CER theoretical framework stimulates teamwork". In essence, employing the PAR design and the paradigm perspectives that guided this study this

provided an equal opportunity for all the co-researchers to participate collaboratively with the researcher to explore their understanding of learner integration and how that understanding could shape the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Recently, scholars also alluded to the fact that critical participatory action research is likely to respond to the agenda of the CER theory as both have the intention to address the issue of social injustice and the promotion of empowerment and improvement of the society (James, 2019 & Poster, 2019). I contend that the cooperative ownership principle of CER complements the PAR methodology and critical paradigm as it propagates the active participation of the co-researchers in the research process. I also contend that the PAR design and critical paradigm helped me to accomplish the main agendas of CER theory by applying its principles in this study.

### **2.8.2 CER has the potential to enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school**

In this study, the learner integration concept is interlinked and interrelated with the emancipation aspect within the selected Ex-Model C school because I am conscious of the previous educational system (apartheid system) in South Africa which created a constant feature of uncertainty not only in the schools but also in South African society as a whole. As I mentioned earlier in Chapter One (see section 1.2) the educational system of South Africa during the apartheid era was divided in terms of race and language as indicated in the studies that revealed that the educational segregation system under the apartheid policy created deceitful contingent realities in South African society and schools were defined by class, language, and race (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015). Indeed, the previous education system brought inequalities and many other forms of cultural domination in schools. This view resonates with the studies which indicated that Ex-Model C schools have and still operate under the specific cultural identity that had been adopted from the apartheid era so as to serve the interests of the white community (Bartlett, 2016 & Zoch, 2017).

Moreover, it also claimed that although the new political situation in South Africa brought a drastic transformation in the education system, the School Management Teams (SMTs) and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in the former white schools (Ex-Model C) seemed not to give more attention in the integration of the diverse learners in their schools (Coetzee-VanRooy, 2016 & Soupen, 2017). While other articles remind us that South African schools



are confronted with many challenges in the enhancement and promotion of learner integration due to the unwillingness of some people to accommodate other races, and cultures freely.

Meanwhile some studies revealed that some of the Ex-Model C schools currently adopt the desegregation policy which is done through assimilation whereby all learners are immersed in the existing historical culture of the school (Zoch, 2015 & Bartlett, 2016) also. This study opposes the policy of assimilation because this policy without doubt perpetuates the existing inequalities within the schools. Moreover, I also contend that the learners will only engage effectively with their education if the school supports them in developing a positive association within their social context and learning process. This study maintains that in order to achieve a successful learner integration a selected Ex-Model C school must revise its practices, programs, and policies in order to create an integrative learning environment that will enable the learners to feel safe and supported as they learn, grow, develop and achieve their academic goals. It is supported by some studies that learner integration can be successfully achieved by valuing the learners' diversities regardless of their backgrounds, ethnic group, status or race (Akhmetshin, Makulov, Talysheva, Fedorova & Gubarkov, 2017). In essence, the CER theoretical framework was adopted in this study because this theory enabled me to defuse or dilute power structures and all forms of domination through dialogue, negotiation, cooperation and communicative interaction.

In addition, the choice of the theory was influenced by the pattern of human emancipation of CER in education context regardless of background, race or status. I am aware of the challenges of multicultural practices in schools as indicated in Dube's (2016, p. 69) study which states that "culture definitely has become a challenge to some of our educational scholars in terms of how effectively and efficiently engagement should be". This indicates that the CER's principle of social justice, emancipation, transformation, and of improving human lives has a huge potential impact on learner integration. In addition, the CER theory also aims to resolve the growing dissatisfaction with sociocultural domination in schools (Seedat et al., 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018; Hutton & Heath, 2020). Regarding multiculturalism this study argues that the transformation principle of CER attempts to understand and recognise cultural differences in educational institutions.

A body of knowledge has shown that the principle of social justice has become a pertinent issue in education, especially in systems that have a history of discrimination and oppression (Pearson, 2016). Therefore, this principle reminds the SGB of schools in South Africa to consider seriously the background of each learner in the school so as to be in a position to practice just and social justice. It is affirmed that social justice focuses on democracy and freedom in the recognition of a learners' humanity in the educational context. Additionally, the process of improving human lives under the CER theory emphasises "negotiation, empowerment and reciprocity" (Roggerone, 2018, p. 49) which in return raises people's awareness of the social injustices and inequalities that are endemic to their societies.

In accordance, some scholars proposed that the principle of emancipation should be considered within the context of various forms of domination and discrimination (Mokotjo, 2017 & Roggerone, 2018). This also supports the claim of articles which revealed that the CER principle of emancipation allows people of different backgrounds and different statuses to work together under freedom and empowerment (CohenMiller & Pate (2019). The application of CERs' principle in this study enabled the researcher and co-researchers to become aware of the social moral and psychological values that influence the issue of learner integration. This clearly shows that using the CER theory in this study resonated perfectly with the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

## **2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Currently, some scholars affirm that employing of the CER theoretical framework in the study helps the researcher not to calculate or code the number of words that have been spoken by the co-researchers to reach the research findings and conclusions (Urquhart, Brown, Duncanson, Roberts & Fisher, 2020). In supporting this, other scholars said that the co-researchers in the CER theoretical framework are not treated as if they are mere impersonal objects in a natural science laboratory rather as knowledge producers (Irshaidat & Borgebund, 2021). Some articles stipulate that the CER theoretical framework does not count the number of co-researchers as the data but rather it concentrates on the human voices that deeply connect with and are concerned about the topic researched (Young et al., 2021). Therefore, the CER theoretical framework guided both the researcher and co-researchers of this study to use language (spoken and written) as a medium of expressing and sharing the experiences of the

learner integration within a selected Ex-Model C school. In particular, Marton (2014, p. 24) affirms that PAR and CER focus on open-ended questions that require a high level of participation, commitment, and self-reflection. Hence, this study managed to draw the research findings and conclusions from the co-researchers' voices that discussed the effective use of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. In addition, both the researcher and co-researchers used language to express their experiences of the learner integration phenomenon. As a result, all the discussions and meetings were influenced by a high level of commitment, participation and self-reflection throughout the research process.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter conceptualised the theoretical framework used as an approach to this study, namely the Critical Emancipatory Research theory (CER). This chapter intends to discuss the related scholarly literature on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools in South Africa. The study was contextualised by reviewing internationally related literature and South African-related studies with the intention of identifying the potential research gaps. The focus of this chapter will begin with definitions of operational concepts related to this study, followed by an outline of different scholarly research studies done on learner integration in various contexts. The chapter will discuss the influences that enhance learner integration in a school's environment and some key elements and legislations documents for the promotion of learner integration in schools. Further, explanation on some of impediments of ineffective learner integration and lastly, the chapter ends with a chapter summary.

#### **3.2 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

This section defines operational concepts related to the aims and objectives of this study. The concepts are defined and described comprehensively to make sure that the reader understands them correctly, as they are core elements that the study relied on. The definition presented below describes the way an operational concept was used in this study and its meaning.

##### **3.2.1 Learner**

The concept "learner" is defined as a person who receives skills, training, and general education at school or in any organisation that deals with learning (Fink, 2013; Marwan 2016). It is also described as a person who is learning new skills or gaining knowledge and subject matter which will be of benefit to her or him throughout their entire life (Granger, 2014). Some scholars affirm that it has the same meaning as the words student, a pupil or trainee (Byrne, 2014). From the educational psychology point of view, a learner is identified as a person who can learn and who can make a new contribution to educational development, to the economy of the country

as well as to its social and political development (Merriam & Kee, 2014; Nokwedi, 2015; Wolf, Guzman & Lopez, 2016; Meskill & Oliveira, 2019).

According to South African Schools Act number 84 of 1996 (hereinafter, SASA no. 84) it describes the learner as any person who is obliged to receive an education. SASA no.84 specifies that every child between the ages of five and 18 should attend school, and it further emphasises that parents should make sure that the child between those ages attends school every school day of the year. Additionally, if the learner fails to attend school, the Head of the Department (HOD) has the mandate to investigate the circumstances that cause a learner to be absent from school without any information given to the school. This study describes a learner as a person who is in the process of gaining knowledge or skills through instruction, experience, or studying.

### 3.2.2 Unpacking the concepts of integration and inclusion

<b>Integration in education</b>	<b>Inclusion in education</b>
Integration is to unite and incorporate people in educational environment into a larger unit.	Inclusion is about recognising and respecting the differences among all learners and building on the similarities.
Integration occurs when separate people or things are brought together. Like the integration of learners' culture from diverse backgrounds into a school.	Inclusion is about supporting all learners educators and the system as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met.
Integration is to coordinate diverse people, to blend them into a functioning and forming a whole in a school environment. Here the focus is on the learners, teachers and other staff members.	In inclusion the focus is on teaching and learning activities, with the emphasis on the development of good teaching strategies that will be of benefit to all learners.
Integration is about getting a person as a whole to 'fit into' a particular kind of system or integrating them into this existing system.	Inclusion focuses on overcoming barriers in the system that prevent it from meeting the full range of learning needs.
Integrated teaching and learning processes enable learners and teachers to acquire and use basic skills in all the content areas and to develop positive attitudes towards them.	The focus in inclusion is on the adaptation of and support systems available in the classroom.

**Table 3.1 Integration and inclusion Adopted from EWP6 p. 17**

The table above presents two concepts, integration and inclusion in education. Discussing the two concepts in this study is necessary for proper understanding of what the two concepts stand for as they are often used interchangeably.

The term ‘integration’ is described as the act of combining, unifying, consolidating and intermixing people who previously were segregated or discriminated against (Tabane, 2010; Altun, 2015; Maguire & Murphy, 2015; Moses, Van der Berg & Rich, 2017). It can also be defined as a tool for inclusive education in which all students are able to “fit in” and to learn regardless of their backgrounds, ability levels, or needs (Harr, Eichler & Renkl, 2015 & McCrimmon, 2015). Similarly, an analysis of the literature by Bridgeway Education (2019) indicates that integration refers to fitting in, namely the incorporation into a society, an institution, or an organisation of people from specific or diverse underrepresented, less privileged or vulnerable social groups, and always in reference to eliminating discrimination due to race, ethnicity, colour, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or class. This implies that the idea of integration denotes the process of becoming part of a group, a society, a country, an institution, etc. Hence, considering the above diagram the researcher of this study argues that in the South African education context an integrated classroom setting means or should be a classroom where students, teachers, stakeholders from the black community, white community, Indian community, learners with refugee, immigrant or migrant status teach and learn together with their peers, also helping each other adapt to the mainstream general curriculum (Moses et al., 2016). In this study, the concept of “integration” is described as an attempt to bring together learners, teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders to become a whole in creating an integrative learning environment for the learner to learn, grow, develop and succeed academically.

Additionally, the concept of inclusion denotes eliminating social exclusion and celebrating diversity. The concept of inclusion agrees that everyone has the same “human rights, social privileges, civil and constitutional liberties, and rights, such as equal access to education, health care, and employment” (Kamberidou, Bonias & Patsantaras, 2019). Similarly, inclusion focuses on helping everyone and leaving no one behind. As defined by the Indian, Nobel-Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen: “Inclusion is characterised by widely shared social experience and active participation in society, by widespread equality of opportunities and life

chances available to people on the individual level and by all citizens reaching an elementary level of wellbeing” (UNESCO, 2008: 6). With this in, the researcher of this study argues that inclusive educational systems should explore how to improve or change the school and classroom to support the success of a child.

As the researcher I am full aware that the section on the distinction between **integration** and **inclusion** is very thin and sometimes it triggers an aggressive and persuasive debate that in most cases lead to an argument that the two concepts may be used synonymously in educational context. Table 3.1 above unpacking and differentiating these two concepts by explaining the concept of inclusion as the process of overcoming barriers that prevent teachers and learners from meeting the full range of teaching and learning needs. While, Integration as the process of getting a person as a whole to ‘fit into’ a particular system or to blend together people of different background, religion, culture and sexual groups orientation into a functioning and forming a whole in an existing system.

### **3.2.3 Ex-Model C school**

Ex-Model C schools are described as former “whites only” schools that were located in white areas (Monageng, 2012; Masino & Nino-Zarazua, 2016). These schools were and still are well equipped with educational resources such as libraries, laboratories, big sports fields, and open-space classrooms (Spaull, 2013; Radebe, 2015; Hill, 2016). They were established in the 1980s and early 1990s by the apartheid government and were reserved for white learners only. They received a high state subsidy, while some of the staff’s salaries were paid by the state (Soudien, 2010; Radebe, 2015; Masino & Nino- Zarazua, 2016). In practice, Ex-Model C schools are characterised by high academic performance due to the availability of resources and greater parental involvement (Van der Merwe, 2011; Stuurman, 2013; Fataar, 2013; Radebe, 2015; Kanyopa, 2019). This study regards Ex-Model C schools as semi-private schools in South Africa.

### **3.2.4 Understanding**

The term “understanding” has been viewed as a teaching and learning concept which relates to the mental process associated with the ability to make suggestions (Luneta, 2015; Shongwe, 2019). It is also defined as an act that involves a process of interpretation. In 2016 one scholar argues that understanding is the interpretation that develops dialectic between guesses and

justification of these guesses (Machaba, 2016). In essence, this term and knowledge were used interchangeably (Kolbe & Rudolph, 2018). These scholars believe that the term understanding refers to the learned skills that give a learner the ability to do something, for instance, if the learner has knowledge of various concepts or ideas and is able to state the opposite of them, or to connect them with other facts and to explain the consequences, then that is understanding.

In this study, this term refers to the general mental structure that encompasses knowing and belief. Since the term understanding is seen as a mental grasp that gives the human brain the power to comprehend information, this study trusts that without the understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school environment the learners' mental functioning will be clouded with frustration and anxiety. This concept corresponds to the first research question of this study which seeks to explore, describe and interpret the learner integration phenomenon.

### **3.2.5 Enhancing**

“Enhancing” is a form of a present participle verb that shows continuous action to the process of improvement. Scholars defined the process of enhancing as the action to resolve and obtain a selected augmentation (Muijs & Reynolds, 2017). In some research, the terms “enhance” and “improve” are used interchangeably as both mean almost the same thing. In some research also scholars agreed that enhancement and improvement are the concepts that emphasise achieving predictable quality continuously (Rozali, Puteh, Yunus, Khan & Khan, 2018). Some articles proposed that enhancing is a continuous process of making something to be more effective than before (Themane & Thobejane, 2019). This study refers to enhancing as procedures taken by the researcher and co-researcher to improve the quality of several services or practices in a selected Ex-Model C school. It is a transformative action that is based on the second phase of Participatory Action Research (PAR design) which intends to go beyond the level of implementing an effective strategy for learner integration within the school. Thus, with PAR design guidance, this study managed to propose integrative ways that Ex-Model C schools could increase practices and programmes that relate to effective learner integration in the school environment.



### **3.3 RELATED LITERATURE**

This section outlines the literature review of the related research studies with the main focus aligned to the three objectives of this study which derive from the main aim of this study. To remind the reader, this study pursues the following objectives:

- To understand learner integration through the co-researchers' perspectives in a selected Ex-Model C school;
- To explore ways which could enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school; and
- To examine the need and importance for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

In order to respond to these aims and objectives of this study a review of scholarly literature both internationally and locally was undertaken.

#### **3.3.1 The understanding of learner integration in schools**

The understanding of the learner integration phenomenon varies from context to context. Context plays a significant role in the understanding of this phenomenon. This means that there is no universal definition. Some research affirms that learner integration can be seen and understood differently and defined differently by people with different backgrounds (Harr et al., 2015; Weber, 2015 & Dei, 2016). On the other hand, some literature described the phenomenon as how learners of different backgrounds, different ethnic groupings as well as people of different skin colours build up a bridge to bind them together (Chisholm, 2015; Radebe, 2015 & Wyk, 2015). In the South African context this phenomenon forces the schools to open doors to all learners regardless of their racial diversity, culture or ethnic grouping.

In most European countries, learner integration refers to the process of revision of educational policies, schools' cultures and practices in schools so that they respond to learner diversity. Some of academic research in Europe reveal that learner integration is a crucial component in education because it helps in promoting freedom in schools (Sandri, 2014; Medda-Windischer, 2015; Dusi & Steinbach, 2016; Munteanu, 2019). Consequently, the education system history in countries like Italy and Israel viewed learner integration as the process of bringing together

learners and staff from Catholic, Protestant, and other religious backgrounds in schools. In the early 1900s these societies were divided religiously, politically, culturally, and economically whereby unfamiliarity with those who are different produced sectarian strife and violence in the society (Henrard, 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018). However, the 21st century brought hope for a better future to these countries despite being burdened by the legacy of their past education systems' history. In accordance, some articles noted that at the beginning of the 21st century, schools in the UK, Italy, and Northern Ireland found themselves in a transitional phase towards equality and better education for all learners (Dusi & Steinbach, 2016). At the core of this journey lies the need for schools to create an integrative learning environment whereby all learners have an equal opportunity to learn and grow (Poole, Brown, McNamara, O'Hara, O'Brien & Burns, 2018). Additionally, other research affirmed that schools in Northern Ireland view learner integration in schools as a means to provide a learning environment that will "accommodate together learners, teachers and other staff from protestant and catholic backgrounds and other faiths so as to learn within, from and about each other" (Nickson, 2016, p. 45). In like manner, schools in Canada view learner integration as the process of promoting equality in the education system and good relationships between people in schools and their families regardless of their culture, religion or social backgrounds (Honey, Pearson & Schweingruber, 2014; Waitoller & Artiles, 2016; Hersh & Elley, 2019).

Moreover, learner integration in UK schools is viewed as a value-driven, learner-centred approach that results from holistic attitudes with an emphasis on developing every aspect of achieving a learner's potential (Henrard, 2016; Alidadi, 2017; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018). Italian schools view learner integration as a fundamental principle that allows learners to pursue their learning in holistic ways without the restrictions that are often imposed by subject margins like religion, status, and cultural or racial grouping. (Sandri, 2014; Bisin & Tura, 2019; Giare, Ricciardi & Borsotto, 2020).

Drawing from the education system history of the United State of America learner integration in this region is viewed as the process of desegregation which implies ending race-based segregation in education in schools. Some American scholars affirm that school segregation in the USA has a long history that has caused inequality and discrimination against learners in schools (Wolf et al., 2016 & Freidus, 2019). A recent study by Smadi and Raman (2020)

believes that since the 1980s learner integration has become a priority in most schools in the USA because it was seen as the only way to end the separation of two groups referring to races.

It is argued that in the last decade segregation policy in the American education system caused the massive growth of inequality, social injustice and poor education achievement for the marginalised learner population in schools (Bovill, 2014 & Munteanu, 2019). With regard to the challenges related to immigrant learners, multiculturalism, and diversity in schools American Young Scholars, education activists, and teachers formed a non-profit organisation that calls for greater integration in New York City's (NYC) schools (Lareau & Goyette, 2014; Wolf et al., 2016) In practice, this organisation focuses on the investigation of the flexible education systems which could respond to the education challenges and make NYC schools more comprehensively learner diverse.

On other hand, some research asserts that in most Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Mexico and Venezuela, learner integration emerged to prevent segregation in the education system, as the concept focuses mainly on non-discrimination against learners who are economically and culturally disadvantaged (de Moura, Legey & Howells, 2018). In essence, research by Rodriguez, McDaniel, and Ahebee (2018) reveals that education in Latin America countries is still being viewed under the shadow of the USA by international grant. As a result, "only a small portion of overseas funding is directed toward Latin American countries" (Rodriguez et al., 2018, p. 66). Research by Ayoub, Gosling, Potter, Shanahan, and Robert (2018) postulates that learner integration in schools in most Latin America countries is described as a response to the discrimination against learners who were viewed as different in terms of their skin colour and those who were coming from the families with low socioeconomic status (SES).

Recent studies showed that schools in Mexico are still reflecting some challenges of coexistence due to the incorporation of learners from different backgrounds into one learning environment (Mellom, Straubhaar, Balderas, Ariail & Portes, 2018). In response to such challenges in Mexican schools some scholars maintain that learner integration is the best way to solve all of the challenges or problems in schools that relate to multicultural learning, because this "concept is disposed to value and guarantee fairness and equality among learners" (Giare et al., 2020, p. 87). I concur with Giare et al., (2020) that learner integration in the school

environment has a tendency to highlight compassion among people, respect for diversity, and equality, and also it promotes self-realisation not only in the learner but also in everyone in the school's environment.

Unlike most countries, in Finland and Denmark learner integration is general education legislation that highlights that free learning should be accessible to all learners (Kansanen, 2014; Henrard, 2016; Li, 2019). Schools and other educational institutions in Denmark view learner integration as a policy of promoting the development and self-improvement of a learner as an individual. Research by Melabiotis (2018); Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) showed that school administrations, teachers, and parents believe that integration facilitates equal opportunities to access the curriculum and frees the learner from various discriminatory practices. Meanwhile, some of the literature affirms that from the early 2000s until late 2017 the Finnish government implemented a national integration education accessibility project “with the aims of promoting barrier-free learning and equal opportunities in schools and other educational institutions” (Munteanu, 2019, p. 97). In the same vein, Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) concluded that the national integration education project was first facilitated by the Finnish Ministry of education and was further supported by universities, the private education sector, and both formal and informal education organisations. As a result, the country's education system leans towards the cross-cutting approach which refers to cutting-off all basic grounds for discrimination based on ethnicity or race group, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or social background (Honey et al., 2014; Waitoller & Artiles, 2016; Hersh & Elley, 2019).

Furthermore, the understanding of learner integration in Asia-Pacific countries like Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia, China, Singapore, Thailand and Bangladesh appears to be the same as inclusion in schools. Research in 2015 like that by Asher and Sen, Cheng, Garba, Byabazaire and Busthami maintained that schools in this region are in the process of bouncing back from the old education system which was influenced by military ethics. In like manner, research in Pakistan and Bangladesh revealed that the previous education system under the military excluded children with various disabilities from attending regular schools (Tsang, 2015; Dubow, Huesmann, Boxer, Smith, Landau, Dvir-Gvirsman & Shikaki, 2019). At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the governments of Cambodia, Northern Korea, China, Vietnam, and Malaysia started to promote the United Nations (hereafter, UN)

agenda of inclusive and quality education for all to make sure that the previously disadvantaged communities are getting the right to education and equal access to schools (Cheng, 2015; Bianco & Slaughter, 2016; Kamenopoulou, 2017).

These countries encourage inclusion in schools through integrative policies with the intention of helping all learners at school to achieve the same pedagogy, curriculum and assessment as the way to promote equality (Garba et al., 2015; Kamenopoulou, 2017; Dubow et al., 2019; Rombaoa, 2019). Research done in Japan points out that military ethics in an education system increased discrimination and segregation as not only learners with disabilities failed to attend schools but also those from low SES families too (Chesky, 2013; Ayoub et al., 2018; Yan, Liu, Israel, Sherwood, Fancsali & Pierce, 2020). In order to respond to the exclusion from learning in schools, in 2001 a group of Japanese education activists, teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders formed a non-profit organisation named “Japanese Integration School Promotion Center (JISPC) which aims at bringing integration in the school system for Japanese children” (Yan et al., 2020, p. 469). Moreover, the JISPC basic mission was to advance learner integration in Japanese public schools so as to provide education for children with diverse needs and interests without discrimination. In 2010 their launching statement explained that “with integration in schools, society also unites, communities and state come together to serve as a model for integration in schools” (Chesky, 2013, p. 13). In the light of the above submissions from Asian scholars I contend that learner integration is a concept that is concerned with reviving and solving the historical education problems that forced children to be out of schools and also to address the issue of marginalisation.

Regardless of the many unanswered questions regarding education in African countries, the global agenda adopted by the UN named Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of 2012 called on many African countries to work towards realising integration and inclusion in their education systems (Steyn & Van Greunen, 2015; UNESCO, 2015; Madoda & Chigona, 2019). It reminds us that integration and inclusion in schools was not only a relevant concept mentioned on the well-founded map as a fourth goal of SDG (Nkula & Krauss, 2014); Iipinge, 2019). Similarly, to some research which postulate that multicultural and diverse learning were also affirmed under the SDG together with the fourth goal which aimed at amelioration of discrimination in African countries’ education systems (Innocent, 2016 & Chirwa, 2018). As many African countries have signed up to these UN agendas, they start to embrace integration

and inclusion not only in schools' practices but also at the level of public policy (Llinares, 2015; Weber, 2015; Chirwa, 2018).

Correspondingly, the Africa agenda 2063 provides the blueprint and master plan for transforming African education into the global powerhouse of the future. This is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive in schools and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the Pan-African drive for unity, integration, self-determination, freedom of people, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Africa Union (AU).

Scholarly works assert that the understanding of learner integration phenomenon in African countries differs as the concept tends to serve different purposes (Mangope, Kuyin, Bramwell, Ramoroka, Major & Musaruwa, 2018). This is because of the challenges faced by each country's education system are not the same. Therefore, for countries which have not experienced race segregation and all other forms of discrimination in the history of their education systems like Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya, Botswana, Zambia and Uganda, learner integration means simply to bring together everyone in school so as to form a whole. Hence, learner integration phenomenon in these countries is seen as a key foundation for each learner's development and growth as the concept plays a potential role in delivery of quality education for all in the school (Froiland & Worrell, 2016; Chirwa, 2018; Mangope et al., 2018). A Kenyan study by Kramon and Posner (2016) revealed that learner integration in schools plays a pivotal role in significant reduction of ethnic favouritism which was a major problem in attempting to establish cross-cultural learning in Kenya's public and private schools.

Some research in Namibia, Malawi, Zambia and Botswana suggests that learner integration perception creates an increased pressure on the SMT and other educational stakeholders to develop an effective organisational framework and to create a conducive learning environment for diverse learners (Chitiyo, Hughes, Chitiyo, Changara, Itimu-Phiri, Haihambo & Dzenga, 2019). This study believes that in some countries the concept of learner integration refers to the promotion of group connection and incorporation with the purpose of reinforcing unity and support for everyone involved. As a result, schools and other educational institutions tend to increase the recognition of everyone's customs, values and norms. Some of African scholars agreed that learner integration in schools not only recognises the dominant culture but also that

it leans towards the recognition, respect, tolerance, integrity and compassion for everyone in that school environment (Chirwa, 2018; Kumi-Yeboah, Brobbey & Smith, 2020)

Even after the democratic election in 1994 the struggle against the apartheid legacy continues in the South African education system. Yet, the country gained a new motivation after the introduction of SASA no. 84 in 1996. This policy proclaimed the right to education for all learners and it provides the guidelines for the Department of Education (DOE) to remove all forms of discrimination and segregation in the country's education system (De Kadt, Fleisch, Richter & Alvanides, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Zochi, 2015; Mahlo, 2017). In the case of South Africa, the understanding of learner integration phenomenon is described as the means to "build up a bridge to bind learners together respectively" (Mahlo, 2017, p. 78). Moreover, the movement for desegregation of the previous racially conceived education system in South Africa has been documented in a number of scholarly works since the early 1990s. Most of these scholarly studies reveal that the previous education system classified learners into racial groups, as they were recognised as African, Coloured, Indian and white and thus, not only the South African society was disrupted, ethnically based and racially biased but also learners, teachers and other staff in schools (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013; Machard, 2015; Padayachee, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). Learner integration in South Africa is a call for the new and pioneering ways of teaching and learning which will take into account and consider every learner in the school environment regardless of his or her race, status, SES or ethnic group as being important.

Drawing from the psychological point of view, learner integration is viewed as the inclusion of learners from different religions, socio-economic backgrounds, races, and with different abilities as well as different genders to be hosted in one school environment with equal treatment and opportunities for them to pursue their studies (Granger, 2014; Bagheri, 2015; Harr, et al., 2015; Nwokedi, 2015; Hockly, 2018; Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020). This raises the issues of curriculum content, learning process as well as teaching methods and techniques so as to fulfil the needs of diverse learners and to steer them towards better learning and academic improvement (Harr et al., 2015; Higgs, 2016; Blignaut, 2020). Psychological perspectives linked learner integration with other aspects that brought awareness of the psychosocial problems faced by the learner in the school context. Scholars revealed that in order to provide a framework for examining and enhancing the learner integration issue in educational contexts,

one should consider the vital components, namely the teacher, the context, the curriculum content and the learner him or herself (Melabiotis, 2018; Naidoo, 2018; Zeeb, Biwer, Brunner & Leudersand Renkl, 2019). I agree that it is important for the critical researcher to work collaboratively with teachers to generate and implement integrative content and instructions so as to enhance learner integration within a specific school context, see Chapter Five (5.2.2).

The sociological perspectives of learner integration refer to a confirmatory effort that enables a significant reduction in the rejection of people on the grounds of race and ethnicity and, at the same time, it should promote a multicultural environment and ways to encourage respect, understanding, and acceptance of all members of the community (Tabane, 2010; Radebe, 2015; Miles & Naidoo, 2017; Freidus, 2019). Meanwhile, sociological perspectives allied the concept of learner integration with functional efforts designed by SMTs to solve the socio-cultural conflicts within the school environment and to promote social interaction as well as peer relationships (Shay, 2013; Casey, 2016; Dittmar, Spolsky & Walters, 2017; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2018). An effective learner integration in educational sites should be determined by the social interaction and positive expectations of the learners' intellectual ability. Some studies done in 2019 like that by Lehmann, Rott, and Schmidt-Borcherding and Zeeb et al. indicate that social interaction in the school environment affects the social and academic development of the learner plus teachers' expectations of the learner. In like manner, some scholarly works also reveal that learners in the school environment with sound integration tend to have good social interaction in the classroom, on the playground as well as outside the school venues (Linn, Gerard, Matuk & McElhaney, 2016).

Lambropoulos (2020, p, 110) explains that “socialization is the key element for learner integration”; this means that it is through socialisation that the learner learns the values, norms and skills for integration within the school environment and the society. I agree with this scholar when he says that socialisation in educational sites is a vehicle for effective learner integration. The reviewed literature above concurs with the first objective of this study which was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The learner integration phenomenon is an inclusionary concept that needs all the educational stakeholders to consider, and celebrate the diversity of learners and also to take into account the social context of the learners by appreciating their languages, cultures, norms and values. This is because learner integration is a phenomenon that is contextually influenced,



and it is fundamentally based on the social world whereby there is an appreciation of both peoples' diverse and historical backgrounds. This study emphasises that the understanding and enhancing of learner integration not only recommends learner development and growth but it also encourages good management of learner diversity in a learning environment.

### **3.3.2 Implementation of learner integration in schools**

Implementation of learner integration in schools has been recognised increasingly at international and at national levels. Processes and practices to integrate learners in education has been acknowledged in some international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 that states in article 26, "everyone has the right to equal and non-discriminatory education" (UDHR, 1948, art. 26). The International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 states in articles 13 to 14 that "the right to non-discrimination education encompasses a transformation in sociocultural practices and policies in all educational environments" (ICESCR, 1966, art. 13-14). Practically, these documents help countries organise their education systems in an integrative way which also requires teachers, parents, educational practitioners and stakeholders to commit to the ideas of integration, inclusion and to the richness of the learners' diversity (Sandri, 2014; Asher & Sen, 2015; Anjum, McVittie & McKinlay, 2018).

Moreover, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989 in its articles 28 and 29 states clearly the realisation of learner integration in schools and other educational institutions. Thus, Article 28 of UNCRC (1989) places strong emphasis on the learners' rights to education and states that it is the duty of schools' administrators to ensure a free, fair and compulsory primary education for every learner and to value each learners' dignity and diversity (UNCRC, 1989; Maguire & Murphy, 2015; Henrard, 2016; Hockly, 2018). Furthermore, in Article 29 the focus is on the recognition that all education systems should be directed at developing learners' talents and personalities and at preparing the learner to become a better and active member of the society (Casey, 2016; Poole et al., 2018; Rozali et al., 2018). On the whole, I contend that the adoption of the articles above should foster the implementation of learner integration in educational sites as a basic practice for respecting learners' rights and for developing them consciously towards their own and others' cultures. Practices and policies for implementing learner integration in schools and other educational sites in European countries is mentioned within the European Convention on Human Rights

(ECHR) as its Article 2 states that “no learner shall be denied the right to participate and engage in educational exercises and any function which has a relationship to education and teaching” (ECHR, 2005, art. 2). The article goes further and states that “countries’ education systems shall respect the rights of parents too, by ensuring that such education and teaching are in conformity with their own religion, culture, values and philosophical convictions” (ECHR, 2005, art. 2).

The European Social Charter (ESC) of 2013 also encompasses a prevention of discrimination based on the grounds of race, sex, language, religion, social origin or age. This applies to all European Union (EU) countries’ education systems (Anjum et al., 2018; Darmody & Smyth, 2018; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). The charter contains a description of the implementation of learner integration in schools and in other educational sites. In its Article 17 the charter stipulates that “EU countries education systems should take all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure learners are integrated in their education and encourage their regular attendance at school” (ESC, 2013, art. 17).

Despite all the legislation highlighted above that supports the implementation of learner integration in schools, some scholars report that some of the European countries are still facing challenges with the implementation of learner integration in their schools, because schools are operating under strict measures with regard to migration, growing nationalism as well as demographic changes in the countries’ education system (Dusi & Steinbach, 2016; Alidadi, 2017; Smadi & Raman, 2020). Most of the European education sectors are experiencing changes in pedagogies, whereby parents, teachers and other educational practitioners are struggling with creating a school environment with equal treatment to all learners and staff regardless of racial, social status or ethnic group (Melabiotis, 2018; Bisin & Tura, 2019; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020).

Recently, studies on learner integration in the Netherlands reveal that “the Netherlands’ Ministry of Education sent the learner integration in school bill to the parliament to be discussed on how this right or policy should or could be implemented in Dutch legislation” (Cerna, 2019, p. 76). It is argued that some schools in the Netherlands are experimenting with learner integration in their daily routines (Caena & Redecker, 2019). The Italian government has already developed a rule to ensure that all schools are fully compliant with provision of

Article no. 24 of the UNCRC (1989) which states that the “learning environment shall effectively provide measures that maximize both academic and social development for the learner and that consistently comply with the goal of full integration and inclusion” (UNCRC, 1989, art. 24).

The implementation of learner integration in the UK education system marks the “light at the end of the tunnel” (Giare et al., 2020, p. 182) and this is because the government is fully engaged with communities to create an appropriate learning environment for all learners at schools. The research studies by Henrard (2016); Alidadi (2017); and Jeon (2019) noted that the British government provides finance to schools to ensure that all equipment, necessary cultural material for integrative and other support is available in schools. On other hand, it is maintained that the strategies and techniques used for implementation of learner integration in UK schools “gives hope that in future we can / will fill the gaps in our education system by allowing schools to be able to encourage all forms of integration in their daily practices” (Jeon, 2019, p. 44).

School systems and achievements are hotly researched topics in the public services in Germany (Medda-Windischer, 2015; Cerna, Andersson, Bannon & Borgonovi, 2019; Li, 2019). The issue of integration in schools is reflected in many statistics and studies that respond to the country’s complexities in education. Besides, the study done in Finland on the “Chinese student migration and integration in Finland and Germany” revealed the results of several studies based on different strategies on implementation of learner integration in schools and other educational institutions (Li, 2019). However, this study did not offer detailed information about the specific roles of the key players in the implementation of such strategies.

In Austria the implementation of learner integration changed the status of “special schools” as now they are open for all learners (Berends, 2016; Dittmar et al., 2017; Lambropoulos, 2020). Historically these schools tended to accommodate learners who were believed to be “genius” or “talented” But since 2009 there have been noticeable changes in the education system as well as in the attitude reflected in the policies. Research by Lambropoulos (2020) concluded that with integration in so-called “special schools” the Austrian education system was “indicating a growing awareness of the need for an education system that is based on equity, integration and inclusion” (Lambropoulos, 2020, p. 29).

Recent research in 2019 like that by Cerna, Ellis and Goodyear assert that the implementation of an integration policy in schools was encouraged by the educational activists ‘all means all’ which was adopted from Australia with the intention to incorporate this into the transformation in schools’ culture, practices and policies so as to accommodate learner diversity. Some recent studies in the USA also reveal that since the year 2015 there has been improvement in the equality and equity of education policies and practices in the USA. The main reason for this is attributed to the integration in schools and other education institutions (Banks, 2015; Woessmann, 2016; Wolf et al., 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2018). This indicates that implementation of learner integration practices and policies in most USA schools addresses the achievement gap between black Americans and whites in predominantly white schools.

In Latin America implementation of learner integration has a propensity for the response to discrimination education systems (Medda-Windischer, 2015; Nickson, 2016; Munteanu, 2019). With regard to the current situation in the countries like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico involving implementation of learner integration in school one can probably agree with the findings of the evaluation of the education systems in the Latin America region in 2018. The research by the Inter Latin American Partnership for Education (ILAPE) commented that the segregated education in these countries catered for “complex schooling systems which needs a heroic patch up job that has to be done not only by teachers at schools but also families, communities and other educational stake holders” (Hilliger, Ortiz-Rojas, Pesantez-Cabrera, Scheihing, Tsai, Munoz-Merino & Perez-Sanagustin, 2020, p. 469).

It is believed by some scholars in Canada that with implementation of an integration policy most Canadian schools’ practices changed the nature of these schools which were guided by an English ethos (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2014; McCrimmon, 2015 & Llinares, 2015). This also was supported by scholars who identified that due to the lack of an integration framework and practices in schools, most learners experienced a range of acculturation problems and developed low self-esteem in the school environment (Ball, 2012; Banks, 2015 & Nikolov, 2016). Studies in Denmark, Finland, Germany and the Russian Federation provided many promising examples of practices inclined towards the implementation of learner integration in schools (Kansanen, 2014; Caena & Redecker, 2019; Li, 2019). This is because the governments of these countries brought integration to the fore and the issue was taken seriously even within communities “as people became subject to the issue by having a numbers of discussions and

plans on how the societies and communities are going to play their parts in bringing a successful implementation of learner integration in schools and other educational institutions” (Li, 2019, p. 244).

Besides, learner integration education policy has become a major focus for academic attention over recent years in most Asian countries. Research on the education systems in China, Singapore and Thailand noted that currently these countries have many integrative education reforms and relevant nationwide practices and policies that include strategies on how to deal with challenges of balancing equality in education and development in rural and urban schools (Garba et al., 2015; Li, 2015; Tsang, 2015; Leibo, 2019). Some research reveals that Asian countries seem to be flexible with regard to the adoption of changes that resulted from the implementation of learner integration practices and policies in schools and education systems in general (Asher & Sen, 2015; Dotong, De Castro, Dolot & Prenda, 2016; Rombaoa, 2019). The government of countries like Japan, Malaysia and Northern Korea have been very supportive by providing aid, funding and support to school managements to enable them to respond to the needs and demands for integration in terms of resources and equipment (Cheng, 2015; Bianco & Slaughter, 2016; Kamenopoulou, 2017).

Research done in China, Cambodia and Japan education systems shows that governments of these nations introduced positive and encouraging measures to ensure that no school system in these countries has not met the need for learner integration implementation as well as promotion of equality and better education for all in the schools’ environment (Li, 2019; Yee Wan & Tsui, 2019). In like manner, research done in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam also affirms that government and communities in these countries promote the implementation of learner integration in schools. As a result, all the rigid education systems changed to become flexible.

In the African context, most of the studies done in sub-Saharan countries affirm that implementation of learner integration in this region is linked to inclusive education practices in schools. (Hunter, 2015; Weber, 2015; Innocent, 2016; Ipinge, 2019). Research by Chitiyo et al., (2019) which explores diversity education in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia confirms that integration in education systems in these countries is viewed as the key element for realisation of equality, social justice and inclusion in schools and other

educational institutions. It is argued that learner integration in schools is the only means for African countries to balance the relationship between culture, language, and identity for the learner, teachers, parents and other staff in schools' environment (Kihiza, Zlotnikova, Bada & Kalegele, 2016). It is through the implementation of learner integration in schools that the learner can get equal treatment, equal opportunities as well as to be provided with equal chances of becoming better citizens in future (Bester, 2016; Casey, 2016; Chirwa, 2018; Murangi, 2020).

A body of literature has shown that the achievements and great gains towards the implementation of learner integration in education systems globally is because most countries around the world responded to the UN agenda of 2063. Some African scholars like Stuurman (2013); Hunter (2015); Bester (2016); and Zoch, (2017) maintain that these two developmental goals have been ratified by almost all the African countries as well as the African Union (AU). Implementation of learner integration in South African schools has been considered with seriousness as the state has guaranteed to put learners' growth and development first by becoming a signatory member of UNCRC since 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1995; This was the first international agreement that was ratified by the South African government soon after the country attained democratic governance in 1994 (RSA, 1995; Altun, 2015; Chisholm, 2015; Coetzee-VanRooy, 2016).

In addition, the South African government promoted the implementation of learner integration in its schools by imposing several DOE items of legislation which recognised the right to better education for all learners and to achieve this right on the basis of social justice and equal opportunity for all learners regardless of their race, background, SES or ethnic group (Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Dei, 2016; Padayachee, 2017). A strand of literature has emerged that emphasises the issue of learner integration in South African schools and it asserts that since the end of apartheid and the initiation of democratic governance in 1994, South Africa has developed a number of Acts, policies and legislation to ensure that learners are culturally, ethnically, physically and mentally integrated in the schools (Dei, 2016; Gamoran & An, 2016; Grobler, Moloi & Ayres, 2017). With the struggle against apartheid legacy in the education system the calls for desegregation and integration in educational contexts were widely framed in the SASA no. 84 of 1996 as the act that specifically revoked and replaced all discriminatory forms and social injustice practices in the education system that

was set up during the apartheid era (Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016; Moses et al., 2017; Seehawer, 2018). SASA no. 84 provides the guidelines for the gradual democratic transformation of schools in South Africa by completely opposing all unfair treatment and lack of integration of learners whilst promoting the high-quality education and equal opportunity for all learners in schools.

Notwithstanding, the changes in the school curriculum and the number of movements in the educational system in South Africa, some scholars believe that the country's education system is still experiencing challenges that are inherited from the apartheid education system, and that the major challenge that schools faced in the post-apartheid era is integration in the schools. (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013; Machard, 2015; Gamoran & An, 2016; Padayachee, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). Conversely, Naidoo (2015); Nel et al., (2016); McGinnity, Fahey, Arnold, Maitre and O'Connell (2018). Omodan (2019) argue that the successful implementation of learner integration requires great effort over many years with prerequisites for policy and professional preparation in South African schools. Integration in South Africa is seen as a reform effort that needs SMTs and SGBs to integrate not only learners at school but also the teachers and other staff members so as to improve all practices and programmes to integrate and accommodate everyone involved in the school environment (Osanloo & Grant, 2016; Pearson, 2017; Soupen, 2017; Parker, 2019).

The SASA no. 84 policy puts emphasis on the integration practices to be made available for every learner in the educational environment. Some scholars affirmed that the act is not clear with regard to the issues pertaining to the poor implementation of learner integration in schools and not clear on strategies for dealing with such issues (Engelbrecht et al., 2015; Dei, 2016; McGinnity et al., 2018). As a result, this remains a challenge for integration in the South African education system, particularly with regard to the linguistic, cultural and the learners' diverse educational needs (Alexander & Mpisi, 2014; Akhmetshin, Makulov, Talysheva, Fedorova & Gobarkov, 2017; Smadi & Raman, 2020). This resulted from the country's unique educational history (apartheid), poverty, diversity and the scarcity of resources in schools are also mentioned as huge obstacles for the successful implementation of learner integration in most South African schools.

Also, some of research agreed that parents, teachers and other staff members continue to struggle with implementation of integration as the country's education historical background, poverty and paucity of resources in schools combine to challenge the realisation of successful learner integration in South African schools (Bagheri, 2015; Bester, 2016; Schouw, Mash & Kolbe-Alexander, 2018). Drawing from the discussions above I contend that due to the racial and ethnical segregation in South African schools, the acts for implementation of learner integration policies and practices are crucial. This is because the learner integration phenomenon would remove all forms of discrimination and prejudice in schools and, at the same time, it could inculcate respect and appreciation of each other's uniqueness.

### **3.3.3 The significance of implementing learner integration in schools**

A growing body of literature has stressed the significance of implementing learner integration, especially in diverse learning environments. Some scholars concurred that learner integration in diverse learning environments provides not only the learner with a range of cognitive and social benefits but also teachers, parents and other staff members feel comfortable with this and feel recognised (Nieto, 2015; Nikolov, 2016; Akhmetshin et al., 2017 & Omadan, 2019).

This study affirms that learner integration is a very important aspect for learner growth and development which should be a positive feature of Ex-Model C schools in South Africa. As confirmed by studies which maintained that learner potential to learn and achieve academically can be influenced by the school environment (Sonn, 2013; Zoch, 2015 & Walker, 2018). This is because the school environment reflects the learner's ability, the learner's self-efficacy and their school-home lives.

I contend that it is important for Ex-Model C schools to create programmes, policies and practices which will bring about the effective support for successful learner integration so as to have effective teaching and learning processes in the school's environment. It is agreed by some scholars that a learner needs a school environment that is supportive and safe to help them succeed and to develop holistically and to attain their academic goals (Fataar, 2013; Themane & Osher, 2014; Froiland & Worrell, 2016).

The concept of learner integration in education arises as an outcome of the UNCRC policy that was documented in 2012 which mainly recommends the provision of equal and quality education for all learners regardless of their culture, race or historical background. The policy



emphasises the provision of equal access to education and equal opportunity to succeed (UNESCO, 2015). Internationally, the concept of learner integration is viewed as inclusion in the education system as both signify the process of interaction of learners with learning barriers together with those with no learning challenges in the same educational setting with equal opportunity to achieve their academic potentials (Shay, 2013; Berends, 2016; Linn et al., 2016; Schouw et al., 2018). The process of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools is now being normalised in the education systems as learners are now getting fair and equal treatment on a daily basis.

Over the past few years, the significance of enhancing the learner integration practices in the school environment has been highlighted by several scholars in European countries. Some research contends that learner integration if is well-practised in the school environment better prepares learners for their lives and also it provides them with a sense of belonging and they become better citizens in adulthood (Medda-Windischer, 2015; Dusi & Steinbach, 2016; Zavgorodnia, Mikheev & Zyma, 2018). In the same manner, studies done in Finland, the Netherlands and Russia believed that learner integration in a schooling environment is of great significance as it fostering practices such as culture respecting, embracing and accepting a diversity of learners as individuals (Melabiotis, 2018; Ellis and Goodyear, 2019; Lan & de Oliveira, 2019). While other scholars agreed that integration in schools provides all learners with an equal opportunity to learn and to develop, as a result, the academic expectations of each learner in such a school environment is at a higher level (Cerna, 2019; Li, 2019; Smadi & Raman, 2020).

Learner integration in USA schools has been reported on with different and unique sets of significance as the notion of this phenomenon has been taken not only as an educational philosophy but also as an important life skill that is beneficial to the learners' growth and development (Nickson, 2016; Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017; Hilliger et al., 2020) because the concept of learner integration has a significant impact on a learner's life that lasts into adulthood. Some studies recognised the importance of learner integration in American schools as a tool for safety, care and support for the learner (Gillborn, 2014; Berryhill & Vennu, 2015). This is because the concept creates an interaction and collaboration in the learning environment which promotes peace and harmony that results in better academic achievement. Besides, other scholars maintained that an enhancement of learner integration in American schools not only

creates the feelings of being supported and included but also it encourages learners to reveal their hidden potentials (Hilliger et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, some studies in Latin America revealed that education systems in countries like Brazil, Columbia, Mexico and Venezuela consider the concept of learner integration in promoting of the teamwork skill among the learners as the notion that significantly trains learners on how to interact and work together with others to accomplish and achieve an integral academic proficiency (Medda-Windischer, 2015; Castro, Rodriguez-Gomez & Gairin, 2017). This supports the view that learner integration is a perfect training for the real life of people in the Latin American region (Zavgorodnia et al., 2018; Acosta-Vargas, Acosta & Lujan-Mora, 2018), this is because the daily academic, social and physical interaction of the people and communities in this region comprises diverse people with different perspectives.

It was reported that implementation of learner integration in a school environment significantly creates a barrier-free learning environment in most Asian countries' education systems as the learner integration concept tends to minimise the feeling of differentiation among the learners (Acosta-Vargas et al., 2018). Some other research specified that learner integration in Indian and Thai schools helps to create a friendly learning environment that enables every learner to develop his or her social, emotional, academic and physical potentials (Rombaoa, 2019); Castera, Marre, Yok, Sherab, Impedovo, Sarapuu & Armand, 2020). It is demonstrated also in studies that learner integration works interdependently with both emotional, social and physical aspects that have influential traits that help to achieve better academic potential and learners' growth and development (Asher & Sen, 2015). Moreover, learner integration also "encourages a comprehensive support system in the schooling environment that significantly decreases the rate of dropout" (Yee Wan & Tsui, 2020, p. 78) and also it eliminates the inferiorities, complexities and barriers that prevent learners from achieving their full potential.

Extending access to schools and integration is a part of the educational Africa agenda of 2063 on the African continent, this is because education is seen as being a crucial aspect not only for the development of the continent itself but also for African people themselves as previously many of them did not have access to education (Bester, 2016; Belgrave & Allison, 2018; Kgwefane, 2018; Mbambo, 2019). In May 2013 the Golden Jubilee celebration of the formation of AU the agenda revealed the declaration marked the re-dedication of Africa

towards the attainment of the African countries vision of some integrated education systems, prosperous and peaceful African continent. The agenda also emphasises on roles of Africans, representing a dynamic force in the international arena. Thus, the Africa agenda of 2063 is the concrete manifestation of how the continent intends to achieve this vision within a 50-year period from 2013 to 2063.

Drawing from most of African countries' education systems they view the learner integration concept as being inseparable from the notion of quality education because learner integration encourages the education stakeholders to take responsibility for the learners' learning process; hence, as evidenced in research by Lipinge (2019, p. 385) that "quality education can only be achieved if all the needs of learners are addressed and every learner is allowed an opportunity to succeed". A study conducted in Namibia and Botswana reveals that learner integration in a school influences collaboration among the learners and their teachers and also it supports the learning and teaching process by paving a fair and equal ground for active participation of all learners in the school environment (Mangope et al., 2018; Chitiyo et al., 2019; Khamis & Scully, 2020).

It is agreed by the scholars that learner integration in schools contributes to improving learner cognition and to enhancing the social learning outcomes of the learners (Sonn, 2013; Hunter, 2015 & Dei, 2016). A body of knowledge also revealed that the education system in Angola and Mozambique regards learner integration as a civil right so as to ensure that every learner is offered equal access and opportunity to attend school while enhancing the democratic learning environment in schools (McGinnity et al., 2018 & Day, 2020). Research on integration in South African schools has shown that the concept not only benefits the learners in that school environment but also the people from the community where the school is located (Hill, 2016 & Akhmetshin et al., 2017). In essence, some literature claimed that learner integration in a rural school environment connects and engages people in the community as the concept emphasises things like collaborative learning and working together in investigating and accomplishing a particular issue facing their community or society (Singh, 2017 & Taylor, 2019). Learner integration in the sub-Saharan region enables the collaboration and interrelationship between the learners, teachers and people from the community to exchange knowledge and skills in solving problems that arise in their community together (Zoch, 2015; 2017; Hill, 2016; Akhmetshin et al., 2017; Day, 2020). This implies that the learner integration

concept in African schools not only aims to identify and foster learner interests, but it also benefits the community by providing a sense of unity and solidarity.

In contrast, the education system in countries like South Africa that faced segregation and marginalisation in its educational history appreciates the learner integration concept as it significantly acts towards the elimination of rejection of a segmented learner population (Hunter, 2015; Mahlo, 2017; Francis, 2019; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). Essentially, when exploring the intersection of race, culture and sexuality aspects in the schooling process in South African schools, Francis (2019) maintains that learner integration in South African schools not only has a considerable impact on the learner's academic achievements but also it improves living in a diverse society and modifies the competitive ground for employment for all learners regardless of their existing diverse origins. As a matter of fact, schools that previously were recognised as being oriented to a single race required an effective way for the implementation of learner integration. This will significantly increase a sense of belonging and acceptance of learners from the other races into the school environment (Mahlo, 2017; Padayachee, 2017; Seehawer, 2018; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). As evidenced in research by Moses et al., (2017, p. 34) "learner integration practices in the learning environment tend to encourage peer group collaboration and they also influence the sense of helping one another in the learners".

Some psychologists demonstrated that a sense of belonging and acceptance are human nature needs for all the learners in their communities where they live and also in the school environment (Harr et al., 2015 & Dittmar et al., 2017). They further argued that learner integration involves affection, love and respect for learner diversity, and it also provides learners with the ability to make friends and to learn effectively. This study affirms that a learning environment is richer, more effective and better when all learners are well recognised and integrated. Learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school is essential because it tends to make the learner become highly motivated to learn and to attain their academic goals effectively (Parker, 2019).

### **3.3.4 Some of key elements for effective learner integration in schools**

Globally, some research like that by Fronseca et al. (2019) and Hersh and Elley (2019) suggested different strategies (factors or characteristics) that schools could utilise in order to

promote learner integration in schools and in other learning environments. Some of these strategies are explained in the following sections.

#### **3.3.4.1 Social Cohesion**

In the context of this study social cohesion is concerned with the process of integrating people within the school environment. It can be regarded as where learner, teachers and other staff in the school are able to negotiate a sense of belonging by sharing their values and identities (Tabane, 2010; Chisholm, 2015; Evers & Ewert, 2015; Mahlo, 2017). Recent research observed that social cohesion in the school environment enables learners, teachers and staff to develop mutual trust for each other and also to develop authentic relationships (Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2017). In essence, some research like that of Witte (2014); Cramm and Nieboer (2015); and Hersh and Elley (2019) assumed that social cohesion is explained as a strategy that can bring awareness and guide learners and teachers in the school environment in order to demonstrate support, to influence positive belief and perception and to regulate behaviour towards one another. Individuals within the school environment that are bonded by social cohesion are believed to be culturally literate and competent since everyone is accepting one another's traditions, history and diverse backgrounds (Evers & Ewert, 2015).

Additionally, some scholars contend that social cohesion provides learners, teachers and other staff at school with the ability to work and learn comfortably when they are in or out of the school environment (Sayed, Badroodien, Salmon & McDonald, 2016). Studies have also revealed that social cohesion is more evident in the better understanding of other peoples' norms, culture and traditions (Burns, 2018; Fonseca, Lukosch & Braizer, 2019). This suggests that it is easier for people from different backgrounds to create a peaceful, respectful, accepting and non-threatening learning and teaching environment in a school. Further, it is claimed that creating a social cohesion policy in the school environment will not only enhance learner integration, but it will also create an integrative and conducive environment for everyone involved in that school (Padayachee, 2017)

On the other hand, some scholars identify the negative impact that a multicultural learning environment could face if it operates without the impulse of social cohesion. This was evidenced in the studies by Harma (2013); Akaguri (2014); Moses et al., (2017); and Walford (2017) who demonstrated that poor social cohesion observation limits the school in its attempt

to convey its proclaimed core business function and operation which is teaching and learning as well as community engagement. Yet again, some literature on learner integration in Korea and Malaysia affirms that the learner faces many challenges in their host school or university that are not the product of meaningful social cohesion, and this situation negatively impacts their learning and their personal development (Chen, 2015; Li, 2015; Tsang, 2015; Dotong et al., 2016; Yan et al., 2020). This study was based on the notion that having social cohesion in a school environment beneficially changes the school as an organisation and that it also develops the people within it. The changes are not only to target experts on cultural awareness and operation but also to promote the general acceptance of culture patterns and to encourage full cultural participation (Witte, 2014; Chisholm, 2015; Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2017; Lan & de Oliveira, 2019). Social cohesion empowers people within the school with the ability to interpret verbal and non-verbal communication (Bagheri, 2015; Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Fonseca et al., 2019). For the school to have an effective learner integration, this study maintains that social cohesion is a crucial aspect that requires the learners and teachers to divulge different aspects of their cultures and to encourage the full participation of everyone involved in the school environment.

#### **3.3.4.2 Cross-cultural practices**

The cross-cultural practices refer to all the instructional practices that enhance learners' and teachers' sense of belonging in the school environment. As evidenced in research which suggested that learner integration can only be successful if the teaching and learning practices and all other instructional practices which take place at school are influenced by cross-cultural factors (Fonseca, 2019; Parker, 2019). It has been discovered that cross-cultural practices in a school environment help people to change their perceptions towards certain cultures which results in promoting high expectations for all learners and teachers by making steady progress and development in their schooling years (Nieto, 2015; Altun, 2015; Akhmetshin et al., 2017; Walker, 2018). Some scholars have argued that an effective learner integration practice in a school starts with the people in the school environment embracing diversity together with collaborative school programmes, policies and practices (Weber, 2015; Henrard, 2016; Cerna et al., 2019; Freidus, 2019).

It is also believed that cross-cultural practices in schools enhance and maintain positive relationships not only for the learners and teachers in the school but also for families, society

and communities in which the school is located (Merriam & Kee, 2014). With cross-cultural practices in place schools can develop multicultural instructional practices and can respect all people from different cultural, racial, and religious traditions. A study conducted in China and Japan notes that the school environment that has effective cross-cultural practices inclines to help learners from different backgrounds, races and ethnic groups to navigate through their inter-relationship and intra-relationship challenges, since these practices encourage integration and interaction among the learners (Asher & Sen, 2015; Garba et al., 2015; Kang, 2015). According to Yee Wan and Tsui (2020, p. 33) “cross-cultural practices in a school environment change the role of the learners, teachers and other staff to become active agents in the promotion of a multicultural environment for the learning and teaching process” as well as to become agents in creating new knowledge, new environment and ideology which will promote togetherness and development.

The influence of cross-cultural practices in a school’s environments has been noted as having a positive impact on the school’s function, operation and improvement within the whole education system. However, some of the studies mentioned several negative impacts on the lack of cross-cultural practices in the school environment, including depression, home-sickness, poor performance in exams, absenteeism and over-anxiety which also seems to constitute a danger to peoples’ lives and the accomplishment of the core function of school which is teaching and learning (Heyneman & Stern, 2014; Kramon & Posner, 2016; Walford, 2017; Hilliger et al., 2020).

This study concurs with the studies by Dusi and Steinbach (2016) and Alidadi (2017) who insist that learner integration can be more effective once the school environment encourages the learners to build mutual relationships with their teachers regardless of their races, ethnic groupings or historical backgrounds. I contend that the mutual relationship motivates learners to feel safe and to be able to take risks and to be fully involved in their learning. Cross-cultural practice is an unavoidable factor for schools that seek to create effective learner integration policies and frameworks for its learners in order to enable them to learn, grow and develop.

#### **3.3.4.3 An equitable and responsive learning environment**

This is another strategy that could influence learner integration positively in the school environment. An equitable and responsive learning environment refers to a well-managed

learning environment whereby the school management makes sure that there is a comfortable, safe and responsive learning environment (indoors and outside) for all learners, teachers and other staff (Chisholm & Nkomo, 2015; Fonseca et al., 2019; Munteanu, 2019; Zeeb et al., 2019). For a school environment to have quality and a sufficient quantity of teaching and learning materials or resources that suit all the learners' and teachers' diverse needs are also included in this strategy (Witte, 2014; Chisholm, 2015; Dei, 2016; Poole et al., 2018; Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Research further argued that learner integration is highly promoted when the daily schedule, routines and structures in the school enhance the positive learning environment and promote respect for all the diversities and cultures among learners, teachers and other staff in the schooling environment (Cramm & Nieboer, 2015). Research done in Ireland by Darmody and Smyth (2018) concurs with that of Maguire and Murphy (2015) who affirm that learner integration in a school environment can be promoted by the school's programmes and practices which enhance democracy, equality and social justice for all learners and teachers. Therefore, integrative programmes in schools are an essential component for the development and acquiring of essential knowledge (Harr et al., 2015; Hunter, 2015; Nel et al., 2016).

I contend that for the school to uphold the global demand for learner integration in the education system the SMT and SGB should advocate an equitable and responsive learning environment because this is inseparable from the concept. Research by Bianco and Slaughter (2016) examined the implementation and importance of learner integration in Thailand where they found that an equitable and responsive learning environment is a major aspect for building up an integrative school environment. They further mention that an "equitable and responsive learning environment promotes the social acceptance knowledge, enhances learner ability to cope with a multicultural learning environment and also to develop a sense of belonging" (Bianco & Slaughter, 2016, p. 56). In addition, the equitable and responsive learning environment is mentioned to be the most important fundamental factor in creating a successful integrative school environment because some psychological facts reveal that "this concept has a pattern of equipping people with a vital mental attitude which is essentially connected with the problem-solving skill which is required in their society and communities" (Zeeb et al., 2019, p. 734). The body of knowledge also highlighted that an equitable and culturally responsive learning environment is an important strategy for learner integration. This is



because the strategy values the understanding and respecting of all the protocols and programmes within the multicultural learning environment (Muijs & Reynolds, 2017).

#### **3.3.4.4 Rapid assessment and action planning**

Rapid assessment and action planning are other factors that influence the learner integration in a school environment. Countries such as Canada, USA, Mexico and the Netherlands viewed this as the foundation for the successful learner integration in schools (Llinares, 2015; McCrimmon, 2015; Maguire & Murphy, 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2018). The report by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) in 2016 reveals that the majority of school managers lacked awareness of the significance of learner integration in their schools and consequently, the country's ministry of education was forced to develop a serious action plan on how schools can promote learner integration. It is argued that Southern Ireland, the Netherlands and Russia still use the rapid assessment and action planning nationally in organising and promoting local integrative actions which support, develop, mobilise and educate families on how to live based on their values while respecting and embracing values and customs of others (Caena & Redecker, 2019). Furthermore, research argued that a meaningful rapid assessment strategy demands respect for the needs and wishes of all learners, teachers and families in the school environment towards the integration practices and policy (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017). Besides, they note that during the action planning phase, it is very important for the school to involve parents and the communities to raise their consciousness of the phenomenon in the society (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017).

Creating an action planning strategy should help to disrupt segregation in the school environment, communities, families and societies and also to leverage the people's choices for their well-being and for the futures of their own children (Harr et al., 2015; Rollock et al., 2014; Dei, 2016; Cerna, 2019). It is contended that a rapid assessment and action planning strategy might not be an easy task since it needs the attention of the education systems and stakeholders to be aware of each and every step and motive that is involved in the education system (Anjum et al., 2018 & Freidus, 2019). The strategy also shows that integration in schools is "not solely the responsibility of the learners and teachers but rather it should be the responsibility of the whole society" (Cerna, 2019, p. 64). Altun (2015), Weber (2015) and McCrimmon (2015) all maintain that rapid assessment and action planning in schools is a grassroots movement towards learner integration in the school environment. This is because learners' families and

communities will joyfully, humbly and willingly enrol themselves into the whole process of the assessment and be ready to take action.

Despite the key elements highlighted above on supporting learner integration in schools, some scholars point out that some of Ex-Model C schools are still facing challenges with the implementation of learner integration in their schools, because these schools were and still are operating under strict monocultural measures (Bianco & Slaughter, 2016). Furthermore, some dominant cultural practices in Ex-Model C schools result in unfavourable pedagogies, whereby the learners, parents, some of teachers and other educational practitioners are struggling to create an integrative school environment with equal treatment for all learners and staff regardless of racial, social status or ethnic group origins (Kanyopa & Hlalele, 2021).

### **3.4 LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT LEARNER INTEGRATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS.**

In previous sections, I tried to explore the phenomenon of learner integration in the school environment from different viewpoints. Related literature from both local and international contexts suggested different strategies to promote the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a school environment. This section presents a related literature review on the legislation and documentation that supports the current situation regarding the understanding and enhancing of learner integration specifically in South African schools.

To remind the reader, the aim of this study was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The study also tries to propose just ways in which schools can promote the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in the learning environment. At present, the South African education system is following the global re-examination of what should be done, why and how the schools' programmes and curriculum contents could improve learners' skills and knowledge through active engagement (Hunter, 2015; Nel et al., 2016; Soupen, 2017; Omodan, 2019). Thus, DOE conflates the issue of integration and inclusion within the multicultural learning environment, so as to address a various challenges facing educational contexts (Stuurman, 2013; Hunter, 2015; Zoch, 2017).

The sequential reviewing of literature regarding the learner integration phenomenon in South Africa reveals historic milestones in the legislation and documentation that seem to support

integration and inclusion in South African schools and in other education institutions. Soon after the institution of the first democratically elected government, the former president made it clear that “diversity may be the hardest thing for the society to live with and perhaps the most dangerous thing for our society to be without” (Nelson Mandela, 1994; Inaugural presidential speech). The following sections present the legislation and documentation that provides the framework and the supportive principles that guide the process of learner integration in schools in South Africa.

The first legislation introduced to redress and to reconstruct the whole process and structure of the in-education system was the introduction of the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 (WPET, 1995). This document became the first step towards integration in schools because it demonstrated not only the need to transform our schools’ environment but it also provided the guidelines for supporting learner integration and inclusion (Coetzee, 2014; Altun, 2015; Chisholm & Nkomo, 2015; Engelbrecht et al., 2015). The WPET (1995) affirmed the belief that the achievement of racial integration in South African schools would enhance the understanding of the learner and also that it would “guide them towards living in a selected integrated and united South Africa” (WPET, 1995, p. 209).

Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution of 1996 which embodies the Bill of Human Rights, recognises the basic human rights of all South African citizens. In addition, the Bill of Human Rights provides a framework for the legislation on the transformation of the education system that emanates from the Constitution, and it affirms the value of each learner’s dignity (RSA, 1996; Fataar, 2013; Graven, 2014; Gamoran & An, 2016). Furthermore, Chapter Two section 9(3) stipulates that “the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds including gender, race, sex, age, religion, culture, language, ethnic or social origin”. Additionally, in section 9(4) the chapter goes further to state that “no person may unfairly discriminate directly against anyone on one or more ground in terms of subsection 3” (RSA, 1996). Thus, the principles embraced in the South African constitution stipulate equal access to quality education for all learners without any form of discrimination or segregation.

Equally important, the South African government introduced the SASA no. 84 of 1996 which also stipulates a set of norms and ethics for the learner’s integration into the South African school environment. On its commitments, the SASA no. 84 of 1996 “mandates the formation

of a multicultural school governance structure which constitutes the elected members” (SASA, 1996, p. 22) which comprises teachers, learners, parents and other staff members in the school. In addition, this act further states that “regardless of the school size, parents and learners in the SGB should always hold a majority by constituting 51 per cent or more of the school governance (SASA, 1996, p. 27). Conversely, the section 5(2) of SASA no. 84 of 1996 stipulates that “the governing body of a public school may not administer any test related to the admission of the learner in that particular school”. In this regard SASA no. 84 emphasises that a learner should learn to cooperate and to live within the prescriptions of a diverse cultural milieu while respecting one another’s beliefs, races, cultures, sexual orientations and ethnical groups. Again, in section 6 this act mandates all the public schools in the Republic of South Africa not to “practice any form of racial discrimination under schools’ practices in implementing policy determined under this section”. Thus, SASA no. 84 of 1996 tends to eliminate all forms of segregation and fragmentation in the education system that were introduced by the apartheid government.

Furthermore, the introduction of the Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998 (EEA no. 55 of 1998) which also recognised the diverse nature of the educators, other staff and learners in terms of belief, culture and backgrounds in the school environment (Themane & Osher, 2014; Harr et al., 2015; Grobler et al., 2017). Additionally, Schouw et al., (2018, p. 205) allude to the fact that “even after the democratic transition employment inequalities posed serious challenges to the democratic state”. Thus, the EEA no. 55 of 1998 aimed for equity through equal involvement and integration of workers in working places including in schools by imposing the daily routine duties that eliminated unfair treatment and discrimination among people working within the school environment (RSA, 1998; Alexander & Mpisi, 2014; Hill, 2016). Research by Zoch (2017, p. 32) concluded that “the EEA no. 55 of 1998 intended to correct the race inequalities in diverse working places like schools by creating a workforce that would support integration and reflect their historical backgrounds”.

In 2001 the DOE provided an official document that acts as a guidebook to principals and teachers in schools. This was entitled “Educating for our common Future” and it aimed to present schools as an integrated community. “This was the first in a series of publications for the DOE that aimed at assisting South African schools to deal with the issue of integration” (Moses et al., 2017; p. 124). This document recognised the systematic changes that may occur

if teachers, SGBs, SMTs and communities commit themselves to the schools' transformation process. In addition, the guidebook states that "the role of all stakeholders is vital if racial integration is to be successfully achieved" (DOE, 2001, p. 1). In this regard, it was hoped that Ex-Model C schools' communities would find the guidebook useful in creating a more integrated school environment and community.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2001 the Education White Paper 6 (EWP6) was launched for building up and promoting inclusion and integration in South African schools. Some literature reveals that the main agenda of EWP6 was to promote the notion of education for all and to foster the development of inclusion and integration in the learning environment (Monageng, 2012; Miller, Craven & Tooley, 2014; Masino & Nino-Zarazua, 2016; Miles & Naidoo, 2017). The EWP6 document particularly focused on the transformation of the education system and on speeding up the successful implementation and realisation of inclusion and integration in the South African schools.

In 2010, in his state of the nation address, the president of the RSA committed the government to re-establishing an integrative health programme in schools in South Africa. As a result, in 2012 the new Integrative School Health Programme (ISHP) was introduced which aimed to build up and strengthen integration in school's health services (Harr et al., 2015; Hunter, 2015; Machard, 2015; Nwokedi, 2015). Research by Shongwe (2019, p. 456) affirms that "although the ISHP initially targeted the most disadvantaged learners in schools, its sequenced plans for progressive implementation changed by ensuring that all learners are reached". The main goal of ISHP was to realise the educational rights of all learners in school, including those who are most vulnerable by taking joint responsibility for ensuring that the schools' environments are becoming more integrative (Chidarikire, 2017; Soupen, 2017; Wessels & Wood, 2019).

The above submission of the legislature and documents for supporting the integration in South African schools seemed to work to influence the current situation on learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. It clearly indicates that learner integration is unavoidable in the education system that previously experienced issues such as discrimination and exclusion, and which is now disposed to create equal opportunities and equal access to schools. The issue of inclusion and integration seems to be the focus of the legislation and documents presented above because it is true that it is through effective integration that we will be able to redress

previous inequalities in our South African education system. Drawing on the current situation regarding the learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, this study affirms that there is a need for critical reconstruction in the process of developing contents in the school curriculum. As evidenced in research by Machaba (2016, p. 89) that “integration in school is fundamental when the curriculum contents mirror the real-life experiences and expectations of each learner in the classroom”. Some research confirmed that the school environment is very powerful ground for both growth and development of the learner, thus, every aspect involved in it should be integrative (Chisholm, 2015; Luneta, 2015 & Naidoo, 2015).

I contend that it is necessary for Ex-Model C schools to create a learning environment that improves learners’ education, health and their life experiences. Research also maintained that Ex-Model C schools need a new framework and approach to ensure an effective implementation of learner integration, and the processes that recognise the diversity of learners in the school (Bagheri, 2015 & Akhmetshin et al., 2017). Some South African scholars raised concern for learner integration in Ex-Model C schools and suggest that more effort is needed to reboot the current learner integration situation in these schools (Moses et al., 2017 & Shongwe, 2019. As evidenced in Shongwe (2019, p. 110) the “current schools’ practices and strategies do not attend sufficiently to the quality of learner integration”. I concur with Shongwe when he says that more attention and critical transformation is needed in Ex-Model C schools’ practices and programmes, so as to influence a natural learning environment that will occur in a multicultural manner by embracing the diverse languages, cultures and beliefs.

The scholarly work done in South Africa shows that the issue of learner integration Ex-Model C schools has been regularly reported. However, most of the studies conducted on the learner integration issue are mainly based on the integration challenges and influencing factors that contribute to its implementation failure in the school’s environment. In addition, these studies failed to show how the learner diversity in a selected Ex-Model C school could effectively be integrated in order for them to develop, grow and achieve academic success. The studies by Tabane (2010), Stuurman (2013), Radebe (2015), Bartlett (2016), Grobler et al., (2017), Olivier (2017), Soupen (2017) and Zoch, (2017) showed that currently the Ex-Model C school environment goes through extensive transformation processes. This means that Ex-Model C schools are in the process of bringing changes into the school environment in order to promote equity and equality in educational opportunities for all learners. This shows the relevance and

need for this study since there is paucity/gap in the body of literature on how to enhance learner integration in an Ex-Model C school environment. As mentioned in Chapter One (1.1) and in the beginning of this Chapter Three (3.3) this study aims to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This study also intends propose integrative ways to respond to the challenges of learner integration in most of Ex-Model C schools in South Africa. The next section discusses the impediments for the successful learner integration into Ex-Model C schools.

### **3.5 THE IMPEDIMENTS AFFECTING THE SUCCESSFUL LEARNER INTEGRATION IN SCHOOLS**

Some research done by South African scholars reveals that although the quality level of education provided by Ex-Model C schools is commendable, the issue of learner integration in these schools remains deeply challenging (Stuurman, 2013; Radebe, 2015; Bartlett, 2016; Soupen 2017). In his research on the integration of schools in Johannesburg Radebe (2015, p. 15) affirms that “learner integration in a selected Ex Model C school is still facing obstruction due to the external and internal factors”. Factors such as the failure of DOE to provide sufficient leadership to these schools and also the effects of the socioeconomic background of some parents, teachers and local communities on the learners in these schools have to be considered (Higgs, 2016; Hill, 2016; Nel et al., 2016; Ngcoza, 2019). These have also been mentioned as the main challenges to the realisation and implementation of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The multifaceted impediments for an effective learner integration are arguably beyond the capabilities and competences of the learners themselves, and of their teachers as well as other stakeholders.

#### **3.5.1 The presence of monoculture-oriented programmes**

The prevalence of monoculture programmes may be a sign of the inability of Ex-Model C schools to address the cultural and ethnical inequalities, and as a result the “monoculture practices and programs lead to the poor transformation of these schools from desegregation phase to integration” (Seehawer, 2018, p. 47). Some studies positively argued that the desegregation phase in the Ex-Model C schools seems to take a longer period than expected because these schools are confronted with assimilation problems (Higgs, 2016 & Akhmetshin et al., 2017). Akhmetshin et al., (2017, p. 283) further posit that the “assimilation policy in a

selected Ex-Model C school is the main hindrance factor for learner integration and mostly fosters the exclusion”. In the same vein, researchers contended that the prevalence of one culturally oriented programme in a multicultural learning environment is influenced by factors like the dominance of values, tradition and customs of the dominant race group in the social context of the school (Nel et al., 2016 & Higgs, 2019). While research by Bartlett (2016, p. 32) maintains that “the prevalence of one culture programs in the multicultural learning context will quest the promotion of one way of doing things which will lead to the problematic and suspect social context of the school”.

On the other hand, other studies in multicultural learning affirmed that a single culture oriented programme in Ex-Model C schools is the main obstacle to learner integration and inclusion (Harr et al., 2015; Masino & Nino-Zarazua (2016). Additionally, Taylor (2019, p. 24) reminds us that the “South African education context views the multicultural learning program as a reform movement and an idea that seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all learners including those from different backgrounds, racial, SES and ethnic groups”. In like manner, Stuurman (2013); Hunter (2015); Hill (2016); Thamane and Thobejane (2019) maintain that although there are a number of categories of impediments that make integration much more complex and challenging in a selected Ex Model C school, still the prevalence of single cultural oriented programmes presents more challenges to the race, class, religion and gender equality for the learners in a school environment.

With the legislation and documents introduced by the government this shows that much has been done to achieve the meaningful learner integration in South African schools, this is because learner integration is believed to be the means for “establishing equality, equity and fairness in the South African education system” (Naidoo, Pillay & Conley, 2018, p. 10). This study specifically emphasises the learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school due to the fact that some of the learners in these schools are from disadvantaged racial groups. As evidenced in some research that since Ex-Model C schools are advantaged, well resourced, with high quality education and high learner achievement expectations it is crucial for these schools to establish the means for integrating its learners culturally, sociologically, physically and psychologically (Radebe, 2015; Olivier, 2017 & Ngoza, 2019). Olivier (2017, p. 47) further argues that “this will significantly impact the achievement of the learners from the marginalized racial groups who are enrolled in these schools”.



Conversely, the prevalence of a one cultural program tendency in most Ex-Model C schools is influenced by 'white culture' which results in learner integration not being visible enough and this seems to be a big problem although these schools do not really acknowledge it (Weber, 2015; Bartlett, 2016; Zoch, 2017; Higgs, 2019). Soupen (2017, p. 240) subscribe to the view that "the most resounding impact of learner integration in some of Ex-Model C schools is the monoculture practices tendency which also restricts the appropriate public education to all the learners in the school environment". For this reason, Innocent (2016); Nada and Araujo (2017); and Naidoo et al., (2018) contend that it is very important, and it is the responsibility of the parents, teachers, SMTs and SGBs to create and implement a detailed multicultural programme for the learner integration in a school environment. Casey (2016); Taylor (2019); Mavuru and Ramnarain (2020) all define the concept of a multicultural oriented school programme as one that encompasses different cultures, languages, ethnic groups, norms and values. Therefore, I concur with Olivier (2017); Naidoo et al., (2018) by saying that it is crucial for the Ex Model C schools to create school programmes that will intentionally provide learners with equal education opportunities so as to respond to the high correlation between the teachers' expectations and learners' performance.

Some South African researchers assert that the issue of multicultural practices in Ex Model C schools is a critical alternative perspective on the issue of learner integration (Chisholm & Nkomo, 2015; Machaba, 2016). This is because "the integration concept tends to include the continuum of aspects and services that prioritise social justice, equity and equality for all learners in the school environment (Naidoo et al., 2018, p. 9). In this light, I contend that the prevalence of single cultural oriented programmes in a selected Ex-Model C school not only intensifies inequalities between the learners but also promotes inequities between the opportunities for these learners from different backgrounds, cultures, and from different racial or ethnic groups. This study maintains that through multicultural-oriented programmes there will be a clear and steady movement in the transformation of Ex-Model C schools from the traditional desegregation education system towards integrated education for all learners in the school environment. As supported in Francis (2019, p. 15) "multicultural oriented programs are not an endpoint or main goal, rather it is a prerequisite measure for the democratic and socially just education in a selected Ex Model C school environment". This study believes that multicultural oriented programmes in a selected Ex Model C school will inspire not only the creation of equal educational opportunities for the learners but also it will provide the learners

with awareness, skills and ability to interact productively with others in their diverse social world.

### **3.5.2 Support from the school authorities**

In a democratic education system, the school governance and management structure plays an essential role in providing equal and fair education for all learners. Thus, this study views the SGBs and SMTs as the school authority structures that have a fundamental role to play in the implementation of an effective learner integration in the school environment. It is clear that the South African education system is still at the cross-roads of the new direction and the disintegration tendency in the education system which was introduced under the apartheid government in the early 1990s (Schouw et al., 2018; Iipinge, 2019; Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020). With regard to the current transformation process of schools in South Africa, some studies maintained that the South African education system is still in transformation from the desegregation to the integration phase and this “transformation process seems to steadily encourage and pressurize the implementation of learner integration in schools in particular” (Naidoo, 2019, p. 4). This creates uncertainty on whether or not the schools’ authorities are able to solve the challenges relating to the learner integration in the school environment (Botha & Kourkoutas, 2016; Nel et al., 2016; Moses et al., 2017).

As demonstrated in research by Naidoo et al., (2018, p. 10.) the “school authority normally is characterized by the process of leading, controlling planning and organizing the efforts and motives on how the school is going to achieve its goals”. It is essential for all the school authorities to develop a shared leadership model with relevant educational stakeholders so as to be responsible for the implementation of learner integration in the school environment. As evidenced in the studies by Abrahams, Jano and Lill (2015); Radebe (2015); and Moloi (2019) schools’ authorities can work in collaboration by providing everyone involved with skills and training on how to deal with complex issues surrounding the school environment. This also was supported by scholars who maintained that for the integration to be truly successful the entire school needs to be committed to making it a reality (Marboh, 2017; Motala, 2019); & Blignaut, 2020). Going further, Blignaut (2020, p. 6) argues that “it is extremely difficult for an individual teacher or school authority itself to bring up and implement learner integration in isolation”. Moreover, it is even worse for the school authority to create an environment that does not support the diverse integration of peoples’ background, race, ethnic groups, religion

and people of different SES, as this will result in forms of segregation and discrimination in the education system (Casey, 2016; Masino & Nino-Zarazua, 2016; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2018; Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020).

The issue of learner integration in South African schools seems to increase the demands for creating equal educational opportunities and a democratic learning environment as envisaged in the South African Constitution. However, some of the studies done on the desegregation and transformation process in schools, indicates that “most of the school’s authorities and teachers were/are not equipped with knowledge to deal with learners’ diversity at school” (Blignaut, 2020, p. 7). Similarly, research by Olivier (2017); Naidoo et al. (2018); and Motala (2019) confirm that some of the Ex-Model C schools’ authorities are confronted with challenges in developing schools’ programmes, practices and policies which are aligned with the country’s Constitution. As a result, some studies concluded by proposing a number of recommendations to Ex-Model C schools’ authorities in order to address the issue of learner integration in their school environments (Bartlett, 2016; Olivier, 2017 & Naidoo et al., 2018).

Furthermore, one cannot deny that the issue of learner integration has emerged as one of the most contested issues in the desegregation and transformation process of Ex-Model C schools. This is because the concept of learner integration enforces the reconstruction of school policies and restructuring of the whole school management structure so as to accommodate the learners’ diversity in these schools (Soupen, 2017; Kanyopa, 2019; Parrett & Budge, 2020). In accordance some scholars contended that learner integration practices in some of Ex-Model C schools has not been successfully implemented largely due to the difficulties experienced by both the school authorities and teachers at the school (Monageng, 2012; Alexander & Mpisi, 2014). On the other hand, Moloi (2019, p. 45) confirms that “the negative attitudes of some teachers and school authority members are the central barrier to the accomplishment of learner integration in Ex Model C schools”. As a result, it is argued that the teachers and school authorities biased perceptions are negatively affecting their ability to facilitate learner integration in the school environment (Machaba, 2016; Marboh, 2017; Walker, 2018; Shava & Heystek, 2019).

Recent studies by Ngwenya (2019); Omodan (2019); and Tchamyou (2020) also mention that the implementation of learner integration in a selected Ex Model C school not only faces the

challenge of poor support from the school authorities but also unwillingness of some teachers and other staff members to accommodate and embrace other cultures, races, ethnic groups and other religious beliefs. As a matter of fact, research by Karlsson, McPherson & Pampalli (2019, p. 145) demonstrates that “most of the Ex-Model C schools’ authorities want to maintain the whites’ status quo and prestige” that is why the SGBs and SMTs are very slow and somehow do not put much effort into supporting the process of integration in the school environment. For the Ex-Model C schools to enhance learner integration, first, the school authorities need to be willing to accept, cooperate and collaborate with other people of different races, cultures, religions and ethnic groups. As confirmed by some scholars that positive attitude on the part of the school authorities is a vital component for the implementation of learner integration in a school environment (Abrahams et al., 2015 & Hill, 2016). In addition to that the willingness to work collaboratively with other races and cultures allows and encourages multicultural practices which should virtually guarantee the success of learner integration in most school environments (Higgs, 2019; Moloi, 2019; Motala, 2019). Thus, development of positive attitudes towards the learner integration needs to be tackled at all levels from the classroom to the school authority level. To sum up, this study maintains that learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school will only be possible if the school authorities, teachers and parents develop a positive attitudes and perceptions towards the practice. The schools’ authority should ensure that school practices, programmes and procedures are approached in integrative ways.

### **3.5.3 Underrated factors from parents and local communities**

In most cases, research done in South Africa has mainly been focused on the links between the school’s environment and the learners’ diversity including racial and language differences, SES and the learner’s background (Naidoo, 2015; Nieto, 2015; Hunter, 2015; Zoch, 2015). In fact, there are a few research studies that have investigated the parents, families and local community’s efforts to have an impact on the implementation and realisation of learner integration in a schools’ environment. One cannot deny that parents, families and the local communities have a big impact on the learners’ life in terms of success, socialisation, and mental and physical development (McGinnity et al., 2018; Meskill & Oliveira, 2019; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). It was mentioned that one of the most important things that a learner can acquire from his/her parents, family and local community is what are called “people skills” or an ability of a person to interact with others effectively (Linn et al., 2016; Dittmar et al., 2017;

Lambropoulos, 2020). This study maintains that in order for the school to be able to practice and implement an effective learner integration, it needs to reduce prejudices and biases while appreciating and uplifting the capabilities of both parents and the learners' local community.

Some research done in South Africa stated that although the educational transformation process demands that the SGBs and SMTs embrace and enhance integration in Ex-Model C schools still do not respond to this demand effectively (Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). This is because “most of Ex-Model C schools’ teachers, stakeholders and authorities do not really welcome this proposal with open arms” (Themane & Thobejane, 2019, p. 366). The schools’ transformation process should increase racial equality and equal opportunities for all learners but there is a broad gap in how parents and local communities can make noteworthy progress in the transformation process (Mahlo, 2017; Padayachee, 2017; Karlsson et al., 2019). Underrated implication factors involving learners’ parents and the local community were mentioned to be one among the major impediments that hinder the implementation of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

Some research such as that by Miles and Naidoo (2017); Omodan (2019); and Zeeb et al., (2019) demonstrates that the implementation of learner integration is inevitable due to the fact that the school transformation process occurs within the context of South African race history. This refers to the policy of racial segregation, legally imposed by the apartheid government, which also produced unequal distribution not only the households but also economic opportunities (Olivier, 2017; Naidoo et al., 2018; Shongwe, 2019; Lotz-sisitka, Rosenberg & Ramsarup, 2020).

Moreover, one cannot deny that the previous apartheid government led to the extreme fragmentation of South African society and economic distance between people of different races which added to the complexities in our education system. Some researchers pointed out that the apartheid legacy not only classified South African society into racial groups but also it shaped particular worldviews that significantly influence how the advantaged and disadvantaged communities interpret and respond to the educational system transformation (Seehawer & Breidlid, 2018). Therefore, underrated factors from both the learner’s parents and from the local community will continue to act as an obstacle to the implementation of learner integration in schools because of the “complications that are shaped by the complex

intersections between parents and communities' social identities" (Lotz-sisitka et al., 2020, p. 24).

In the past decade, the conventional wisdom emerging from the public and intellectual discussions was that the disadvantaged parents and communities would take advantage of South African educational transformation and positively respond to it. But some scholarly research did not go deep to this matter; hence, as I mention in the beginning of this section that there is a limited body of research that shows how the previously marginalised group will be engaged within the new school structure. As evidenced in the body of literature that there is still substantial work to be done to address some of underrated issues raised by some parents and local communities so as to achieve racial equity, learner integration and equal access to educational opportunities (Motala, 2019 & Murangi, 2020).

Impediments towards learner integration in schools are inescapable especially when one has to address those aspects that previously operated under one race or culture (Ex-Model C). This was recognised in the studies by Coetzee-van Rooy (2016); Francis (2019); Parrett and Budge (2020) that one cannot separate the state's specific racial history, discrimination and inequalities from the issue of integration in schools or any other educational institutions. On the other hand, studies on the educational access and opportunities for all learners have increasingly acknowledged the significance of learner integration in the schools' environment (Abrahams et al., 2015; Akhmetshin et al., 2017; Shouw et al., 2018; Ngwenya, 2019; Higgs, 2020). Underrated issues raised by parents and the local community were found to create a huge rupture in the implementation of learner integration in a selected Ex Model C school as some parents and teachers chose not to be well disposed towards it. Consequently, the research agreed that the underrated factors of learners' parents and local community became an impediment toward the integration in some of Ex-Model C schools as the results of apartheid discrimination and segregation policies are still being experienced today in the social and economic status of some parents as well as their communities (Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020).

As a matter of fact, learners' parents and community are always recognised by the strong correlation between their SES, school choices and schooling outcomes, therefore, "it is very difficult to disentangle the relative importance of these factors with perceptions towards the learner integration in the school environment" (Zoch, 2017, p. 45). Thus, this study maintains

that learner integration is a complex phenomenon which needs multi-dimensional factors and strategies for its implementation. In addition to that it is important for Ex-Model C schools to consider the inputs of learners' parents and their local communities in the process of reconstruction of their policies, programs and procedures by operating under multiple indicators. The assumption that the learner integration issue can only be addressed through and within the school environment is a problematic assumption (Woessmann, 2016; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017; Wessels & Wood, 2019; Walus, 2019). Again, some parents, teachers and school authorities might argue that parents and local communities have a minimal role to play in what is happening to school and that there is no need to stress about their integration, this study will hopefully create an awareness that this lack of integration will worsen the division in South African education.

### **3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed literature related to the study. Documents to support learner integration in schools were discussed. More importantly the key research questions of the study were answered in this chapter by using several perspectives from both international and local contexts. In addition, the conditions under which the learner integration can be implemented successfully and the possible impediments for the successful learner integration in schools were also examined. Drawing from the literature review presented above, it is obvious that the learner integration phenomenon has emerged as a central concept in research about teaching and learning process in both an international and a local context.

While the chapter conceptualises the term “inclusion” and “integration” as both are used to bring awareness and recognition of learners' diversity in educational institutions, the study literature of the study mainly focused on the learner integration phenomenon to correspond with the research objectives mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. Moreover, research by Ngcoza (2019) suggests that in order to overcome the challenges of learner integration in schools, there should be transparent communication among all the stakeholders. Thus, I contend that learner integration phenomenon demands the ability to demonstrate the connection and coherence of perspectives of all the stakeholders within the education contexts.

Consequently, section 3.3.4 of this chapter identified some key elements for effective learner integration in schools. Hence, it is important to have a system in a place that co-ordinates and

monitors the implementation of these key elements for the learner integration in schools. This will lead to the effective analysis and understanding of the current situation of learner integration which also will help the stakeholders to propose an appropriate plan to improve the situation accordingly. The next chapter focuses on research design and methodology. The qualitative research approach, the critical research paradigm and PAR as the research design are discussed. The chapter also explains in detail the data generation process under the PAR design by ensuring that all the ethical consideration issues are addressed. Additionally, the chapter presents the procedures followed to select the research site and co-researchers, and profiles for research site and co-researchers are presented. The chapter also explained the trustworthiness of the study and its limitations.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Review of the related literature for this study was discussed in the previous chapter. In the current chapter the research design and methodology used in the study is explained. In other words, this chapter describes the research schedule and procedure followed to comprehend the enhancement of learner integration knowledge. The chapter outlined information regarding the qualitative research approach, the interpretive-cum-critical research paradigm and Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the research design. Moreover, it explains in deep the objectives, characteristics and relevance of PAR to the study. Furthermore, the clarification on selection of research context and co-researchers, data generation and analysis are explained. The chapter also explains how trustworthiness was addressed and the way ethical issues in the research were observed. The chapter ends with a brief synopsis.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH (QUALITATIVE)**

A research approach can be defined simply as an inquiry that describes the procedures, plans and tools to be used in the research process (Creswell, 2016; Leavy, 2017; Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2018). It is the research approach that determines the research philosophical world view (research paradigm), the research design and the research methods of the particular research/study (Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Emerson, 2015; Flick, 2018). Some researchers maintained that it is the research approach that classifies and categorises the philosophical worldview of the research/study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 56) point out that “the research philosophical world views are merged to form three research approaches, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed approach”. Moreover, other scholars affirmed that the study that adopts the quantitative research approach normally includes the positivist or post-positivist philosophical world views, whilst qualitative studies include constructivism or transformative philosophical world views (Creswell, 2016; Schoonenboom, 2017, Patkar, 2018). Going further, Patkar (2018, p. 45) claims that “the mixed research approach normally corresponds to the pragmatist philosophical world views”. Nonetheless, some studies concurred that there are different ways in which these three research approaches orient the nature of the study as well as the role of the researcher during the research

process (Flick, 2018; Kumar, 2018 & Mohajan, 2018). Further, Kumar (2018, p. 18) argues that “the quantitative research approach pushes the research study to be more likely a set of worked out formulas”. On the other hand, the qualitative research approach is seen to be more concerned with explanation and understanding of the phenomenon within naturalistic contexts (Allen, 2016; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). The mixed research approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative data within a single research investigation (Schoonenboom, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Therefore, this study used a qualitative research approach to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. A qualitative research approach is a powerful research method that gives a researcher the power and ability to generate detailed data with rich descriptions of what is being studied (Lewis, 2015; Allen, 2016; Padgett, 2016; Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2018). Additionally, the qualitative research is in depth and relies on direct quotations reflecting people’s personal perspectives and experiences (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015). This means that data presented in a qualitative study are not manipulated, rather, they are direct responses that are based on the experiences, produced by the co-researchers when responding to the research questions. Moreover, this research approach is useful in describing co-researchers’ behaviour, feelings, experiences and their perspectives. As evidenced in research by Tracy (2019, p. 274) the “qualitative research approach emphasizes the collection of descriptive data in a natural setting”. This means that the phenomenon is normally researched with reference to the inductive thinking and understanding of the co-researchers from their point of view.

A qualitative research approach is the research methodology that is more concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena as they occur naturally (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013; Emerson, 2015; Flick, 2018). Moreover, it is argued that the qualitative approach prioritises the researcher’s and co-researcher’s abilities to interpret and understand the major causes and effects of the researched phenomenon (Patton, 2017; Ragab, 2018 & Leavy, 2020). Therefore, this study chose this research methodology to encourage collaboration and active participation of both the researcher and the co-researchers at the research site over time, which also was directed by social interaction within the research environment. By utilising the qualitative approach, this study was able to promote freedom of expression for the co-researchers. This is because the researcher asked questions that required

co-researchers to share their experiences, perceptions and views regarding the phenomenon. In the same manner, scholarly works assert that the qualitative approach includes the interpretive and naturalistic tendencies in exploring the phenomenon in the research context (Creswell, 2016; Patton, 2017 & Flick, 2018). This means that the qualitative approach attempts to create fair ground for both the researcher and the co-researchers to investigate the issue based on the natural context and to try to understand it from their own points of view. Consequently, the qualitative research approach is applicable to this study because the aim of this study was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

This approach helped me to gain a deeper understanding of how people in a selected Ex-Model C school understand the issue of learner integration and the ways they think they can help to promote the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in the school environment. Hennink et al., (2020, p. 78) maintain that the “qualitative approach not only allows the co-researchers and the researcher to have direct interaction but also collaboration and equal participation are more influenced by this approach”. Thus, this approach helped me to value the co-researcher’s contributions by ensuring their active participation in the constructing of knowledge and in achieving the aims and objectives of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM (INTERPRETIVE-CUM-CRITICAL)**

A research paradigm is a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view (Flick, 2014; Hua, 2015; Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Allen, 2016). On the one hand, it is described as a net that comprises assumptions or philosophical views on how to understand the world (Patton, 2015; Padgett, 2016 & Ragab, 2018). It is also concerned with assumptions pertaining to ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Yin, 2015; Hua, 2015; Schoonenboom, 2017). Ontology refers to what a researcher thinks reality looks like and how he/she views the world. Epistemology refers to the nature of how knowledge is acquired. Axiology is a philosophical study of ethics, values and methodology which mainly focuses on how the researcher attains knowledge about the world and how the data are generated (Struwig & Stead, 2013; Flick, 2014; Smith, 2015; Mohajan, 2018).

Based on the assumptions of the paradigm above, the researcher of this study decided to research the issue of learner integration within the two paradigms, namely, the interpretive and the critical paradigm. The researcher used an interpretive paradigm perspective to explore the co-researchers' perspectives and lived experiences that informed the understanding of the phenomenon. While the critical paradigm perspective was used to explore ways which could enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Encountering and engaging in blurring the paradigmatic edges has significantly guided this study to inform the interrogation of the ideologies underpinning the interpretive and critical paradigm.

#### **4.3.1 Interpretive paradigm**

This section discusses the interpretive paradigm which the study employed for understanding the co-researchers' perspectives of the learner integration phenomenon within the research context. This implies that the study employed the interpretive perspectives to answer the first research question which asked: "What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?" As evidenced from scholarly works that the interpretive paradigm objectives are to describe, examine and understand peoples' behaviour, experiences and interactions within their socio-cultural context (Flick, 2018 & Tracy, 2019). This study, therefore, used the interpretive approach to describe, explore and understand the co-researchers' perspectives on the issue of learner integration within the school. It is affirmed that in the interpretive paradigm the co-researchers are studied through their perceptions, opinions, characteristics and experiences (Mohajan, 2018). Drawing from the above submission it is important to note that the interpretive paradigm is based on the following assumptions:

##### **4.3.1.1 Nature of reality in the interpretive paradigm**

Ontology is a philosophical inquiry that deals with the nature of reality (Jacobs, 2016; Manual, 2016; Vinz, 2016). The fundamental ground in understanding the nature of the reality in the interpretive paradigm is that the realistic is the ground for the nature of reality, whereby the researcher believes that "everything is out there being a law of nature which is just needed to be discovered" (Stinchcombe, 2020, p. 87). Hennink et al., (2020) assert that the reality under the interpretive paradigm is socially constructed and is found in the meaning of described experiences of the co-researchers. This implies that the interpretive approach helps the

researcher to explore the reality of the co-researcher's world through the multiple, subjective and social fluid (Leavy, 2017; Schoonenboom, 2017).

#### **4.3.1.2 Knowledge construction in the interpretive paradigm**

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that examines how knowledge is constructed, attained and transmitted (Noel, 2016; Padgett, 2016; Patton, 2016). Hence, the interpretive paradigm implies that knowledge is socially constructed which is relative and subjective (Lyon, 2017; Patkar, 2018). Moreover, the interpretive paradigm views the knowledge as a unique aspect that differs from one context to another. This implies that knowledge is based on how people interpret their social phenomenon within their socio-cultural context.

#### **4.3.1.3 Value and ethics in the interpretive paradigm**

Creswell and Poth (2018); and Flick (2018) define axiology as an inquiry which deals with the issues of ethics and values. The axiological assumptions of the interpretive paradigm intend to inform the bond in the dialogue and recognised subjective values from the co-researchers' explanations of their lived experiences (Kumar, 2018). Thus, the interpretive paradigm considers and values the different individuals' experiences and their actions by ensuring a high level of ethical consideration

#### **4.3.1.4 Strategies used to obtain the knowledge in the interpretive paradigm**

Research methodology is "the path through which the researcher needs to conduct his / her research" (Yin, 2015, p. 59). Therefore, the interpretive paradigm offers the methodological approach that emphasises collaborative and active participation in the research process, in gaining in-depth information by interpreting and describing peoples' lived experiences (Flick, 2018). Thus, the interpretive paradigm was employed to answer the research question that sought an understanding of learner integration from the co-researchers' point of view. This paradigm allowed me to see how the co-researchers construct the meaning of the researched phenomenon by describing and examining their experiences and their interactions within their socio-cultural context.

However, the study makes a clear distinction between the interpretive and the critical paradigms by employing critical paradigm perspectives to answer research questions 2 and 3

which are: How could learner integration be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school; and Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school? Therefore, the next section discusses the critical paradigm.

#### **4.3.2 Critical paradigm**

The rise of the critical paradigm can be traced from the historical phases in the development of critical theory (CT) as explained in Chapter Two (2.2.1). The philosophical foundation of the CT seems to span several generations from the effective start of Kant's philosophical assumption in the early 1870s, followed by the Frankfurt school of philosophers in the 1950s until it achieves its rational expression under Hebermas' Concept of Communicative Action (Gordon, 2013; Manual, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017; Starr, 2019). Hebermas' Concept of Communicative Action intentionally stipulates the critical philosophical world views that challenge the status quo. Besides, some of the critical scholarly work like that by Giroux (2017), How (2017) and Msimanga (2017) uphold the view that the critical research paradigm corresponds to the CT assumption which pursues human emancipation from the things that have been enslaving and oppressing them over a period of time. Hence, the critical research paradigm tends to work towards the creation of a democratic society with fair and equal recognition of people regardless of their power, class or socio-economic status (SES) or race/ethnic group (Peason, 2016; Fook, 2017; Sudan & Zuin, 2018).

The critical paradigm is suitable for this study because of its three main compatible characteristics as explained in Mbambo (2019). The first characteristic is that the critical paradigm includes interpretive, descriptive and explanatory tendencies towards the research phenomenon (Mbambo, 2019; Starr, 2019; Walus, 2019). Therefore, this characteristic responds to the first objective of this study which seeks to explore the understanding of the learner integration from the co-researchers' perspectives within the selected Ex-Model C School. The second characteristic is that the critical paradigm inclines the action towards the phenomenon researched (Darder, 2015; Manual, 2016; Walter, 2017). Another researcher also believes that "the critical research should stipulate the action plan and procedures to be carried out both by the researcher and by co-researchers so as to transform the challenging situation in the research site" (Mbambo, 2019, p. 123). This characteristic responds to the second objective of this study which seeks to explore how the understanding shapes the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

Last, the third characteristic involves the promotion of social justice. This study is based on the PAR design which leans towards the equalisation of the status of all people involved in the research process. As evidenced in Nkoane's (2013, p. 114) statement that "social justice maintains a particular focus on the critical pedagogy and principle of active engagement of people with active voices and dialogues". Therefore, this characteristic also responds to the third objective of this study which seeks to examine the need and importance for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

This study corresponds to the argument of the studies done in 2017 like that by Chidarikire, Mokotjo and Msimanga who pose that the PAR design, CER and critical paradigm tend to promote social justice while emancipating the society by transforming the forms of inequality and imbalances in the research context. The critical paradigm like any other research paradigm is recognised through its ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodological assumptions which will be detailed on the following sections.

#### **4.3.2.1 The nature of reality in the critical paradigm**

Ontology is a philosophical inquiry that deals with the nature of reality (Jacobs, 2016; Manual, 2016; Vinz, 2016). There are two fundamental grounds for understanding the nature of the reality in social science research. First, is the realistic ground for the nature of reality, whereby the researcher believes that "everything is out there as a law of nature which is just needing to be discovered" (Stinchcombe, 2020, p. 87). The second ground is the critical nature of the reality, whereby the researcher believes that there is an inappropriate reality in our societies which was created and shaped by people in power, in the political structure with socio-cultural status or with the support of ethnic groups so as to reify them and to neglect the reality of the majority (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Scotland, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result, the critical paradigm emerged to counter the situation by pushing the researchers to be more relativistic and to construct the reality through co-researchers' understanding.

The critical paradigm emphasises mainly the empowerment of the majority so as to emancipate themselves and to construct reality from the real socio-historical context and to challenge the status quo (Nkoane, 2013; Dube & Hlalele, 2018). The critical paradigm believes in historical realism, a view which says that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic,

ethnic, and gender values of reality that were once deemed plastic but which have become crystallised (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Scotland, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Therefore, this confirms that in most communities including school communities, there are some realities which were socially constructed entities under constantly internal influence and which favours certain groups of people in that community.

#### **4.3.2.2 Knowledge construction in the critical paradigm**

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates how knowledge is constructed, attained and transmitted (Noel, 2016; Padgett, 2016; Patton, 2016). Moreover, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p. 67) argue that the epistemological assumption in the critical research paradigm is that “knowledge should be constructed through the interaction and communication between people in power and the majority of the society”. This is because the two ways communication and interaction influence power to counterbalance each other, which results in the formal relationship, empowerment and promotion of equality (Moleko, 2014; Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) .

In other words, under the critical paradigm knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society (Lewis, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). Flick (2018, p. 43) maintains that “in the critical paradigm knowledge is constructed under subjectivism”. On the other hand, the epistemological view on the critical paradigm is that “knowledge is one of subjectivism which is based on real world phenomena and linked with societal ideology” (Scotland, 2012, p. 13). Thus, the critical paradigm is a paradigm that raises critical consciousness in our societies. Equally important, the critical paradigm encourages the collaborative space between a researcher and the co-researchers to work together and to share their knowledge so as to understand the phenomenon being researched and to develop the solution to it (Bourne, Crossfield & Nicholas, 2017; Maseko, 2017; Mokotjo, 2017).

Any critical research has an agenda of change; therefore, the critical paradigm emerged as an attempt to construct procedures with the aim of addressing the phenomenon so as to change the practices into a new critical development (Scotland, 2012; Punch, 2013; Yin, 2015; Mokotjo, 2017; Patkar, 2018). According to Cohen et al., (2018, p. 87) “the aim of the critical paradigm research is to emancipate or transform society since it is often not supporting an



existing regime”. Likewise, the critical researcher explores the social and political views, critiques them and seeks to empower the individual to overcome phenomena (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Scotland, 2012; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Allen, 2016; Kumar, 2018). Drawing on the critical paradigm views which are normative in nature, this study explores the research questions that are related to the co-researchers/co-researchers’ understanding, experiences, beliefs and perceptions concerned with the learner integration in a selected Ex- Model C school. The co-researchers were asked to share their understanding of the phenomenon, and of how and why they think learner integration needs to be enhanced in certain ways. Thus, this study contends that it is important for the knowledge to be constructed under equitable power relations between people in power and the majority. This is because, the aim of the critical paradigm is to emancipate and transform the society.

#### **4.3.2.3 Values and ethics in the critical paradigm**

The critical paradigm is defined as an inquiry which deals with the issues of ethics and values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The axiological assumption of the critical paradigm is that it is “the guiding force for theorising subsequent beliefs and research decisions” (Dube, 2016, p. 45).

Darder (2015, p. 69) alludes to the fact that “axiological assumptions of critical paradigm emphasise the recognition of social and political reality of co-researchers, their cognitive and psychological states as well as their morals and values”. This is because it helps a researcher to focus on the actual comprehension and the nature of the group of people participating in the research process. Also, to concretise the critical paradigm’s axiological concerns it is important for any critical or transformative educational research to be grounded in addressing issues like oppression, unequal distribution of power and discrimination in the society (Jacobs, 2016; Maseko, 2017; Pearson, 2017). Consequently, in order to challenge and to transform the status quo, the researcher needs to empower the co-researchers so as to be able to emancipate themselves from an ongoing enslavement or oppression (Manual, 2016; Vinz, 2016).

However, some research on ethics affirmed that it is necessary that the researcher and co-researchers challenge the status quo within acceptable ethical considerations, so that the research findings become relevant (Cohen et al., 2013 & Gajjar, 2013). Furthermore, the axiological assumption of the critical paradigm emphasises “transparency and interchange discussions” (Mbambo, 2019, p. 124). This means that the research design should benefit both

the researcher and co-researchers so as to develop the knowledge, skills and self-sufficiency. Therefore, this study conceptualised the critical paradigm as the appropriate perspective because its axiological assumptions seem to be relevant to the aims of this study. As evidenced in the research by Bourne et al., (2017, p. 23) the “axiological assumption of the critical paradigm inclines the study to values of one’s value”. This means that the critical research value is shown by the collaboration and active participation of the co-researchers during the research process, also, by what the researcher valued when he/ she presented the results of the research.

#### **4.3.2.4 Strategies used to obtain the knowledge in the critical paradigm**

Research methodology is “the path through which the researcher travels to conduct his / her research” (Yin, 2015, p. 59). It is the research methodology that shows how the researcher formulated the research problem and objectives, as well as how the whole process of analysing and presenting of data obtained during the research process is described (Yin, 2015; Coghlan, 2019). In section 4.2, I mentioned that this study is grounded within the qualitative research methodology. Thus, since the critical paradigm allows the researcher and co-researchers of the study to work collaboratively to explore freely the phenomenon, hence, this methodology helped me and my co-researchers to express ourselves deeply and in detail regarding all the issues that related to the phenomenon researched.

The collaborative and active participation that was mainly influenced by both the PAR design and the CER theoretical framework that frames this study, ensured that co-researchers were critically aware of the current situation on learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school environment, because they operated daily within this environment. As a result, with critical discussions and actions both the researcher and co-researchers were able to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Collaboratively, they managed to come up with integrative solutions towards resolving the phenomenon, as presented in the interpretation and presentation of findings in the Chapter Five (5.2). Moreover, Chapter Seven (7.4) presents the detailed contribution of the study on how an Ex-Model C school can influence, support and promote the understanding and enhancing of the phenomenon by adapting its programmes, policies and practices.

Thus, the researcher and co-researchers were fully engaged in transforming the practices and programmes in a selected Ex-Model C school into a more integrative programme so as to accommodate the diversity of learners and staff fairly and inclusively. In particular, this methodology was favoured because it was non-numerical. The aim of the study was to explore the issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school and to make sense of the situation through peoples' experiences, perceptions, feelings and beliefs. The next section discusses PAR as a research design for this study.

#### **4.3.3 Interpretive-cum-critical paradigm**

Based on the explanation of the two paradigms employed in this study, the researcher of this study productively drew the issue of learner integration within these two paradigms because both perspectives are reflexive to the researched phenomenon. In essence, the research employed an interpretive paradigm to explore the co-researchers' perspectives and lived experiences that informed the understanding of the phenomenon, while the critical paradigm perspective was used to explore ways which could enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Consequently, some of the critical researchers respond to the emancipation and transformation agenda by employing the interpretive-cum-critical in their studies, because it believed that this paradigm diversifies practical engagement in research process (Lawless & Chen, 2019). Thus, process of encountering and engaging in the interpretive-cum-critical paradigm has significantly helped this study to blur the paradigmatic edges to inform the interrogation of the ideologies underpinning in the interpretive and critical paradigm.

However, the desire to blur the paradigmatic edges is not a common thing in the educational research because in most cases it is seen as contradictory perspective (Kerber, 2019). Conversely, the study chose to employ this because it is grounded under the communicative interaction between the researcher and co-researchers which turned them to have full commitment and responsibility for handling the research process and for ensuring that the study was completed in a successful way. Also, the communicative characteristic of CER presents a multifaceted approach to this study by interpreting, describing and appreciating the co-researchers' contributions (Verovsek, 2018; Wessels & Wood, 2019).

On the other hand, some scholars mentioned that studies which intend to blur the paradigmatic edges often face the difficulty in shaping the presentations of two paradigms while focusing on

the emancipation and transformation of the researched issue (Kerber, 2019; Lawless & Chen, 2019). To support this, Moore and Manning (2019, p. 6) allude to the fact that “studies that demark the paradigmatic borders are often seemingly very contradictory”. Conversely, other scholars mentioned that the researcher seeking to traverse the paradigm boundaries should have a full understanding of the key points of convergence and divergence between the two perspectives in the study (Cannella, Perez & Pasque, 2015). Thus, it is important for the researcher to consider this in the research objectives and questions, while being able to deal with implications accompanying the methodological choices.

Essentially, the study dealt with the issue of blur edges between the interpretive and critical paradigms. Hence, in both objectives and research questions the researcher pointed out the key points of meeting and divergence between the two world views by formulating research questions that formed lines of extension from one paradigm to another. As evidenced in the research question 1 in which the study employed interpretive approaches to illustrate the co-researchers’ perspectives on the understanding of learner integration. While noting the importance of their lived experiences the study remained consistent with emancipatory and transformative principles by highlighting social changes in questions 2 and 3.

#### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN (Participatory Action Research: PAR)**

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is the research design for this study. PAR is the qualitative research design that focuses on solving certain problems in education or at a research site (Wahyuni, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). PAR also was defined as a comparative research design that uses a series of steps to compose planning and actions to be taken and for the fact finding about the results of that action (Wang, 1999; Algozzine & Hancock, 2017; Mokotjo, 2017). Likewise, some scholars confirmed that the purpose of a PAR design is to seek a particular way in which the research problem can be solved within the research site/context (Scotland, 2012; Chidarikire, 2017 & Mbambo, 2019).

PAR further emancipates marginalised individuals who participate in the research process by “enlist[ing] them as co-researchers” (Mbambo, 2019; p. 224), this implies that PAR design provides people participating in the research and process with an opportunity for active participation in the whole research process.

Some action researchers contended that PAR tends to give the co-researchers respect by valuing their opinions and perceptions (Allen, 2016; Leavy, 2017 & Sileyew, 2019). That means that co-researchers become capable of bringing about a transformation of the challenging situation in the research context by their full engagement within the research process. In like manner, it is affirmed that PAR is a research design that treats the co-researchers as experts by ensuring that they use their lived experiences related to the research phenomenon to bring about positive impacts on their community (Venter & Goede, 2018). In congruence, Cohen et al. (2018); Kanyopa (2019) proposed that PAR is an approach to conducting research that aims to take action in unfavourable situations and to create a resolution framework.

This study chose the PAR design because of its main underlying aim which is to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. With PAR design and phases this study managed to empower the co-researchers and to give them a voice, to share their knowledge on their understanding regarding the phenomenon. Moreover, the second phase of PAR design which is “action” empowered the co-researchers and the researcher to take action in the creation of a conducive learning environment to enhance the learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. It is believed that PAR is an action research design that has no single actor; both researcher and co-researchers collaborate in the whole research process (Ferreira, Ebersöhn & Botha, 2013). This also shows the importance for the research to be grounded on the co-researchers’ perspectives and perceptions. Studies by Nkoane (2013); Maboya (2014); and Yin (2015) maintain that PAR seeks to understand the phenomenon and to transform it through the active participation of the co-researchers (co-producers of knowledge). Indeed, PAR design allowed me and my co-researchers to undertake the query of learner integration together. We understood the issue, analysed and managed to transform the challenging situation and its operations within the selected Ex-Model C school. The next section discusses the historical background of PAR design.

#### **4.4.1 Historical background of PAR**

The historical background of PAR can be traced from the works of the German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin whose influence extended from 1890 to 1947. Lewin is considered to be a founder of PAR design because of the impact of his first work in 1944 which brought challenges to the strong separation of the researcher and researched in the traditional research

methods (Pant, 2014; Peters & Besley, 2015; Morales, 2016). In addition, Coghlan (2019, p. 56) claims that “the acknowledgement of Lewin as the father of PAR was because of his tactic to study the challenging issue while attempting to impose changes on it”. It is affirmed that Lewin’s works introduced the term “action research” for the first time as an approach for conducting research in the social science field and he emphasised the need for co-researchers to be fully involved in the whole research process (Douglas, 2016; Jacobs, 2016 & Lykes, 2016). Going further, Lykes (2016, p. 36) claims that “people would be more motivated about the issues happening in their lives if they are fully involved in the decision-making process”. Lewin’s PAR model addressed the issues like discrimination, segregation and assimilation by suggesting a three-stage process of change, namely unfreezing, changing and re-freezing (Scotland, 2012; Ferreira et al., 2013; Algozzine & Hancock, 2017). In essence, the description of these three stages of change Lewin insisted on the human change, whether at the individual or group level by giving greater consideration to the person’s cognitive and psychological dynamics that are connected to one’s perceptions, thoughts, feelings and attitudes (Janes, 2016; Msingama, 2017; Shamrova & Cumming, 2017).

Lewin’s PAR model assisted the researcher and co-researchers to study the challenging issues within the research site and to initiate changes while they continued to study the impacts of those particular changes on people’s psychology, and on their social and cognitive states. In a word, the Lewin’s PAR model continues to influence more researchers to organise their studies and to report them in a cyclical manner which includes acting, observing, reflecting and evaluating (Sitter, 2017; Ngwenya, 2018; Mbambo, 2019).

The roots of PAR can also be traced from the works of Paulo Friere in the 1970s. Freire was a Brazilian educator and author who contributed to the development of PAR design through his book entitled *Education as a Practice of Freedom* which challenged social relationships in traditional education systems that were based on power and domination (Freire, 2015; Wood, 2019; Isaacs, Roman & Carlson, 2020). Besides, the PAR design Freire was mainly concerned with empowering the poor and marginalised people in society, as evidenced in Freire’s (1970, p. 87) statement that it is necessary that the “marginalized and oppressed people of society should be aware of issues pertaining to literacy, land reforms analysis and the whole community in general”. Freire’s PAR design emphasises the development of the consciousness of critical issues in all people of the society regardless of their status, gender or position. This

was also supported by Isaacs et al., (2020, p. 34) who outlines that “Freire’s PAR model required people to be knowledgeable about social, political and economic issues of their community”. Additionally, Freire also believes that through the observation and reflection on the issues taking place in the society, people will be able to take action against the forms of oppression and discrimination that exist in their societies.

In the early 1990s PAR design emerged as a movement that shares a vision of creating societies free from any form of domination (Lykes, 2016; Chidarikire, 2017; Husni, 2020). This movement arose within the field of the social science communities, international development and Adult Education Departments. Some research mentioned that PAR was viewed as a movement because it was linked to the three crucial trends, namely (i) the radical and reformist approaches to international economic development assistance; (ii) the view of adult education as an empowering alternative to the traditional education system; and (iii) the ongoing debate within the social science over the dominant social science paradigm” (McDonald, 2012; Moleko, 2014 & Lewin, 2015). Consequently, this enabled other groups of researchers such as feminists to spread the PAR design by evaluating power differences on the basis of age and gender.

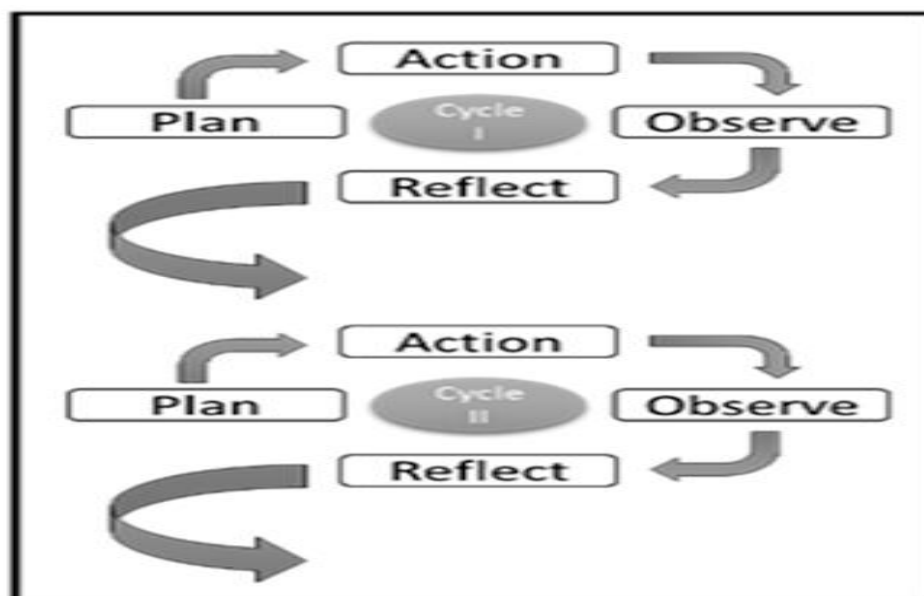
Some research such as that by Morales (2016); Shamrova and Cummings (2017); Fine and Torre (2019) explain the PAR design from a feminist point of view by combining both “methods of social investigation of problems and participation of oppressed gender and ordinary people in the problem-solving process” (Fine & Torre, 2019, p. 440). Furthermore, feminist researchers’ views like Maguire (2006) and Gottesman (2016) regarded PAR design as an educational process for the researcher and co-researchers to interact, discuss and structure social systems that would value and appreciate each gender’s contribution. Ngwenya (2018, p. 59) verifies that “PAR design is a way for co-researchers and the researcher to join in solidarity and act towards the imbedded social changes”. Meanwhile, PAR design has been deployed in a variety of disparate fields of inquiry such as anthropology, social science, psychology, sociology, philosophy, feminist research and community-based research (Cook, Brandon, Zonouzi & Thomson, 2019; Mbambo, 2019).

Due to the multiplicity of fields in which PAR design operates this has resulted in the different meanings of PAR, the different models on how to apply it and the variety of ways to understand

it which at times is declared to be contradictory. As evidenced in Kemmis and McTaggart (2014); Peters and Besley (2015) there is diversity in the meaning of PAR design which is understandable as each field identifies it in its own way. PAR has been defined as a philosophical research design that recognise the need of each person being studied to be full involved in the research as a participant. According to Freire (2015); Douglas (2016); Cook et al., (2019) they all confirm that PAR design fosters empowerment, equal access, social justice and active participation of all the people involved in the research process. The next section presents the Kemmis and McTaggart's PAR model as a research design adopted in this study.

#### 4.4.2 Kemmis and McTaggart's PAR model

This study applied the principle of PAR design proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) which involves two cycles and a spiral movement of its four phases, namely planning, action, observing, and reflecting. In implementation, this model works in a similar way to Kurt Lewin's model since both models are cyclical in nature. The Kemmis and McTaggart's PAR model of action research study involves two cycles (cycle I and II) which consist of four steps (planning, action, observing and reflection). In addition, education research, which seeks to transform the education system, normally precedes these four main phases that started after the preliminary study (Ferreira et al., 2013; Algozzine & Hancock, 2017; Msimanga, 2017).



**Figure 4.1:** The spirals of action research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p. 29).



Figure 4.1 indicates the movements on how this study effected its PAR design under four dynamic principles as proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart. Some researchers argued that this model seeks to take the research process into a linear movement from the critical phase to an improved one in which all the progress is guided through systematic steps (Kemmis et al., 2014; Dube, 2016; Chidarikire, 2017). In order to be able to transform the situation in a selected Ex-Model C School this study upgraded this model by insisting on the inclusion of self-reflection in the spiral movement of planning, acting, observing and reflecting throughout the research process. As demonstrated in Kemmis and McTaggart (1990, p. 5) that PAR is seen as a “collective and self-reflective approach that allows co-researchers to improve their own social situation”. In addition, studies by Bradbury (2015), Dupuis et al., (2016); and Coghlan (2019) indicate that these four PAR phases act as the basis for understanding the phenomenon researched as well as its situation, while guiding the researcher and co-researchers on how to take proper action to improve and to transform that situation.

The spiral movement in this study started soon after the preliminary inquiry and observation of the problem in the research site. This was followed by the second step which was the construction of the plans for the action to be taken based on the preliminary verdicts concerning the issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The next step was the implementation of those plans and preparation for the transformation into the action phase. In addition to that the post-observation phase was done during the whole action phase. The observation process was collaboratively upgraded by both the researcher and co-researchers in this study. As supported by some studies that is important for both the researcher and co-researchers to act as practitioners and observers at the same time (Morales, 2016; Woods, 2019).

Therefore, after the reflection phase on the first cycle both the researcher and co-researchers of this study decided that they needed to improve the situation by more action in the next cycle of PAR. Based on the suggestion by Kemmis et al., (2014), Kramer-Roy (2015), Wessels and Wood (2019) that this model should seek to take the research process into the linear movement from the critical phase to an improved one, this was implemented. This is because the researcher and co-researcher had a second chance to rectify the mistakes and shortcomings of the first cycle of PAR. As a result, this study engaged in a second cycle, in which Zoom meetings for data generation were rescheduled and conducted under four phases of PAR

design. Learners also were asked to present some photos of their understanding learner integration and ways that they thought it could be enhanced in their school.

Some studies such as those by Liebenberg (2018); Ngwenya (2018); Chevalier and Buckles (2019) posit that there are conventional research methods that PAR design could utilise, including document analysis, interviews, multi-stakeholder meetings, art-based methodology etc. This study encouraged comprehensive conversations and critical debates under the second cycle through the multi-stakeholder meetings and photo interpretation sessions of the photovoice method as described in Chapter Five (5.2), presents a clear understanding of the issue researched and proposed ways for enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

Furthermore, Chapter Five (5.2) of the study outlines the possible ways that the selected Ex-Model C school could use to enhance the phenomenon as proposed by the co-researchers and the researcher. As a result, the PAR design guided this study to encourage active involvement of co-researchers during the multi-stakeholder meetings and during the photovoice sessions. The active involvement principle of PAR increased the response to the research problem while providing the guidance to both the researcher and co-researchers by proposing the solutions to the problem researched (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Lewis, 2015; Smith, 2015). The next section deliberates on the detailed information regarding the objectives of PAR.

#### **4.5 OBJECTIVES OF PAR**

PAR was considered by the researcher to be a suitable research design to address the epistemological, ontological, axiological and methodological assumptions that are based within the critical paradigm (Kemmis et al., 2014; Pant, 2014; Msimange, 2017). Also, it is a qualitative research design which recommends changing the status of co-researchers by encouraging their empowerment by allowing them to have full control of the research process. In essence, this research design enhances the active engagement of everyone involved in the process of observing, planning, acting and reflecting to improve the situation at the research site. Nevertheless, some researchers agreed that the PAR design is committed in ensuring that both the researcher and co-researchers are working collaboratively in data generation process (Mokotjo, 2017; Venter & Goede, 2018). It is also devoted to improving the challenging issue within the research site by ensuring that “the nature of knowledge and scope of that knowledge

represents the interests of the majority” (Wessels & Wood, 2019, p. 114). The PAR perspectives described above are strongly supported by its two main objectives discussed below:

#### **4.5.1 The objective of PAR is to democratise the research process**

Research by Yang and Sung (2016) affirms that PAR design democratises the research process through a collaborative process which turns the passive position of the co-researchers into a more active one by them becoming facilitators/co-knowledge producers in the research process. Also, it is maintained that PAR represents a democratic approach to research in which co-researchers work collaboratively with the researcher in the whole process by “co-generating the knowledge that will address a certain issue in the research context” (Jacobs, 2016, p. 11). In addition to that Masimanga (2017) alludes to the fact that PAR design stipulates the use of democratic ethics by emphasising the empowerment of co-researchers alongside its main focus on changing the co-researchers’ situation. Drawing from the abovementioned discussions, I maintain that PAR is a goal-oriented research design that seeks to bring positive changes to the people on the issue researched. PAR design pays close attention to power relationships and encourages the intentional sharing of power between the researcher and co-researchers (Wood, 2019; Ayaya, Makoele & Van der Merwe, 2020).

This design helped me as the researcher to challenge the line between myself and co-researchers by empowering them to have the same responsibility and mandate in the research process. This study managed to uphold democratic ethos throughout the research process by ensuring active participation and empowerment of co-researchers. My co-researchers were not treated as objects during the research process; rather, they were my partners in producing the knowledge on the researched issue. In this study learners as co-researchers were valued to the same extent as the other adult co-researchers. This means that I as the researcher managed to consider all the contributions from my co-researchers as important regardless of their age, race, gender or position at school.

Basically, PAR’s objective to democratise the research process was also supported by the CER theory that framed this study. As evidenced in the Chapter 2 (2.5) of this study which stipulates the objectives and aims of CER the promotion of democratic participation and emancipation was mentioned as the second objective of CER theory. The PAR design helped me to respect

and value each thought and view expressed by my co-researchers when they actively engaged in proposing ways in which the selected Ex-Model C School could promote the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in its daily programmes. Chidarikire (2017, p. 367) reminds us that “the core value of PAR design is that research is done with mutual respect for each one involved”. This study showed respect towards its co-researchers by providing equal opportunities and recognition of each co-researcher’s contribution.

Peltier (2018) suggests that the collaborative approach and active engagement involved in the PAR design reflects its widespread use of the concept of emancipation. Wood (2019, p. 195) states that “PAR has emancipatory roots” and Ayaya et al., (2020) maintain that the PAR design reduces inequalities through the social involvement of people in investigating and in taking action to challenge situation in order to improve their lives. I contend, therefore, that PAR design is crucial for the study that intends to improve social issues that negatively impact the lives of people within the research site. Thus, with PAR design and CER theory guidance, this study permitted its co-researchers within the selected High School to identify and acknowledge the issue of learner integration from their own perceptions. Further, all co-researchers were active participated in exploring of understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

#### **4.5.2 The objective of combining action and research**

The word “research” has been simply defined by some scholars as the process of exploring scholarly works and of obtaining some evidence to generate new knowledge that can support or challenge existing evidence (Denzin, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The word “action” refers to the measures or process of doing something typically to achieve a certain aim (Sitter, 2017; Shamrova & Cumming, 2017). Therefore, the tendency of combining together “action” and “research” can be explained through the two main concepts of PAR namely; participatory research and action research. Accordingly, the concept of participatory research in PAR design paves the way for the linear process of conducting research in which equal participation and involvement are applicable to both the researcher and co-researchers (Chivalier & Buckles, 2019; Wood, 2019). The PAR’s participatory research concept tends to treat equally (as partners) the researcher and the co-researchers throughout the research process. Additionally, the participatory research concept of PAR normally involves selection of the research

phenomenon that speak to the related issues that seem to have an impact on co-researchers' lives (Walker, 2018; Zuber-Skerritt, 2018).

The second concept of PAR which is action research normally connects the preliminary observation to reveal the steps and strategies to be taken to address the challenging issues in the community (Schouw et al., 2018; Coghlan, 2019). This concept implies that our communities and stakeholders of certain societies need to be re-evaluated from time to time by reflecting on the central issues like democracy, discrimination, oppression etc. (Wood, 2019; Husni, 2020; Oladeinde, Mabetha, Twine, Hove, Van der Merwe, Byass & D'Ambruoso, 2020), and to take actions which will improve local problems using local solutions and as a result develop social services to address imminent needs.

A combination of these two concepts into one research design “automatically promotes changes desired during the research process which prompts people involved to become the action takers” (Cook et al., 2019, p. 380). Furthermore, PAR's action research concept aims to improve the world by changing or transforming it through planning, acting, observing and reflecting. As evidenced from the research by Oladeinde et al., (2020, p. 247) “studies that are grounded under PAR design are guided by circular motion of its core four phases (plan, act, observe and reflect)” throughout the data generation, analysis and presentation. Thus, these four phases are directly linked to action research that guides the researcher and co-researchers to work collaboratively towards the transformative changes through the spiral process.

This study responded to the research and action objective through the PAR circles in which both researcher and co-researchers were actively engaged in data generation, analysis and presentation. Moreover, this PAR's objective sought to understand the challenging issue by trying to change it for the better. (Freire, 2015; Mokotjo, 2017; Fine & Torre, 2019).

The study also countered to the design by ensuring the equal participation and involvement of the researcher and co-researchers to determine the actions to be taken so as to improve the learner integration situation in a selected school. Besides, it is argued that the combination of research and action into PAR turns this research design into an educational tool that purposefully focuses on making changes within the community. The combination of research and action in PAR tends to promote the process of improving peoples' lives in the community (Snyder, 2019 & Starr, 2019). Thus, through such blending, this study managed not only to

explore learner integration but also to change the situation into one that was more inclusive and integrative. The next section looks at the characteristics of PAR.

## **4.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF PAR**

PAR has a number of antecedents and characteristics that reflect its three epistemological pillars, namely participation, action and research (Coghlan, 2019; Tracy, 2019; Giroux, 2020). It is through these pillars that “the research process tends to reveal the critical nature of knowledge construction and the extent to which that knowledge is going to represent peoples’ interests” (Giroux, 2020, p. 224). This perception was strongly supported by Merriam and Grenier (2019) that PAR design encourages co-researchers from the deprived communities to examine and analyse the essential reasons for their marginalisation and oppression. The following sections discuss four characteristics of PAR that enabled the researcher to work in a partnership manner with co-researchers to accomplish the research goal.

### **4.6.1 PAR advocates equality**

PAR grew as a research design that enabled equality between the researcher and all people involved in the research process. PAR advocates equality in the research endeavour between the researcher and co-researchers to work in cooperation as partners in a manner that leads to action for change (Bradbury, 2015; Chidarikire, 2017; Walker, 2018). Moreover, some researchers argued that equality under the PAR design is observed by the process of disputing power inequalities and change in the whole research process to becoming an extensive justice and equality process (Dube, 2016; Coghlan, 2019 & Husni, 2020). To elucidate further, Fine and Torre (2019) state that PAR design advocates equality by valuing and appreciating all people involved in the research process. As evidenced in Ngwenya (2018) also asserts that PAR calls for a mutual and consensual research process in which the main goal is to give co-researchers authority and appreciation for participating in the research process. This study maintains that PAR design advocates equality during the research process by considering that everyone is able and valuable. As a result, this design tends to focus on the promotion of full involvement and active participation of all role players in the research process.

The characteristics of PAR helped this study to reduce the power of the researcher and to increase the power of co-researchers so as to equalise their positions in the research process.

As a result, co-researchers were able to exercise the ownership and control over the knowledge generated regarding the research aim which was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Furthermore, their contributions to this study were very important because they were my fellow experts on the issue researched. Also, this characteristic helped us to construct integrative activities throughout the process of conducting this study with fairness, respect and equal opportunities for everyone involved by reducing fear and prejudice in my co-researchers.

#### **4.6.2 PAR is transformative in nature**

The transformative nature of PAR can be traced from the inception of PAR dominated by Kurt Lewin's and Paulo Freire's ideas that sought to transform society through theory and practice (Pant, 2014; Morales, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017). It is maintained that PAR design aims at transformation whereby the insight gained through critical reflection is used to improve the action (Freire, 2015). Therefore, with this characteristic, PAR design involves the habit of 'reaching out' from the particular situations and conditions that impact on peoples' lives (Tracy, 2019). Research by Noel (2016); Msimanga (2017); and Starr (2019) claims that transformation under PAR aims to solve practical problems by critical thinking and by constructing knowledge which is free from the forms of prejudices and superstitions.

In the research by Wheeler, Shaw and Haward (2020, p. 49) they claimed that "PAR design has the transformation agenda which seeks to raise the consciousness and affirm the majority on the issues of power, oppression, discrimination and social injustices that needed to be addressed in their society". This means that the transformative characteristic of PAR seeks clarity on the current state of political and social issues that have an impact on peoples' lives in the society and which can transform them into a better one. On the one hand, the increased demand for a multicultural learning environment pushes many educational researchers to uphold the PAR design with its transformative nature so as to address the issue of the social construction of cultural and social identities in school and in other educational institutions (Sitter, 2017; Zuber-Skerritt, 2018; Mbambo, 2019). Research by Oladeinde et al., (2020) affirms that PAR rests on two principles, namely the pursuit of social transformation and democratisation of the knowledge generation process. The transformative characteristic helped me and my co-researchers to transform the situation of learner integration in a selected Ex-

Model C school. Equal participation and active engagement helped this study to transform the power relations during the research process in terms of who owns the knowledge.

#### **4.6.3 PAR is critical**

Some of research revealed that the main aim of PAR is to help people to recover and to free themselves from unsatisfying social structures, that are irrational, unjust and oppressive and limit their development, growth and self-determination (McTaggart & Kemmis, 2014). Therefore, PAR is the research process through which people deliberately examine social practices related to their lives so as to “set out all forms of unproductive ways of interpreting and describing their world” (Douglas, 2016, p. 45). The critical character of PAR was mainly prompted by the work of Foucault (1957), Habermas (1966) and Horkheimer (1993) that was based on critical pedagogy. Their studies espoused the ideologies of critical elimination and resistance against oppressive regimes in the society. This idea also resonates with the activities in most Ex-Model C schools in South Africa that still operate under the prescriptions of a monocultural regime that oppresses other cultures that exist in the school. With this insight, I hold that PAR is critical in nature because it attempts to eliminate false consciousness that seems to be unjust and oppress people in a selected Ex-Model C school and to promote inclusivity and integration of learners regardless of their ethnic grouping or backgrounds.

This characteristic helped the researcher and co-researchers of this study to discard the historically created distortions that control practices, processes and programmes in a selected Ex-Model C school. Again, the critical character of PAR guided both the researcher and co-researchers to eliminate false consciousness which was imposed by the previous education system into this selected school. Research by Zoch (2017, p. 14) affirms that the “previous education system created the notion that the Ex-Model C school’s authority cannot be questioned even though it might negate some learners’ improvement and development”. The critical character of PAR helped the researcher and co-researchers of this study to suggest amendments to the issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, by proposing ways in which this school may influence the understanding and enhancing of learner integration within the school’s daily programs.



#### **4.6.4 PAR is emancipatory**

Another notable characteristic of PAR is emancipation. As explained in Dube that emancipation comes within a context where there is domination. This implies that in most cases, the dominant group tends to possess power so as to make their interests, beliefs and wishes to assume mainstream status that “should not be questionable and must be adopted by all members of the society” (Dube, 2016, p. 137). It is also affirmed that the emancipatory characteristic of PAR tends to create knowledge which is concerned with freedom of people from constraints in their social structure (Wood, 2019). Similarly, research by Walker, Martinez-Vargas and Mkwanaenzi (2020) posits that the emancipatory character of PAR describes the procedures through which the co-researchers become free from the suppressive research process. Some of research studies suggest that the emancipatory characteristic of PAR emphasises the formation of social norms, values and culture that encourages improvement in human liberties (Cordeiro, Soares & Rittenmeyer, 2017). Indeed, the emancipatory character of PAR focuses on the analysis of unjust, oppressive structures and practices that diminish people’s capacity to achieve humanity (Chidarikire, 2017; Walker, 2018; Mbambo, 2019).

The above submission played a vital role in this research because co-researchers of this study were empowered to free themselves from undesirable situations and conditions regarding the issue of learner integration in their school environment. As evidenced from studies which maintained that the emancipatory characteristic of PAR tends to assist co-researchers to free themselves from the clutches of an unproductive sociocultural structure (Fine & Torre, 2019 & Ayaya et al., 2020). Since I had adults and young co-researchers in this study, I had to mitigate the power equality between them by dividing them into two research teams. I did this so as to emancipate young co-researchers from being under the control of their schoolteacher and principal. Thus, in team one I had all co-researchers (principal of the school and two teachers and four learners) who participated in the multi-stakeholder meetings. As a result, both adult co-researchers and minors were actively involved in multi-stakeholder meetings by exploring the understanding and ways to enhance the current situation of learner integration in their school.

In the second team I had only four grade 11 learners as young co-researchers who participated in the photovoice sessions. As demonstrated in research by Isaacs et al. (2020) that PAR results from multi-process of knowledge generation and immediate actions that gives co-researchers

an authority to direct the research process and to address the contextual needs. In addition, I employed the one-to-one consultation technique as a way to emancipate my co-researchers. Also, I encouraged an active involvement and engagement throughout the research process. I shared the power with them by letting them decide the day, the date and the time for running our research sessions. In the following section I discuss the relevance of PAR design to this study.

#### **4.7 RELEVANCE OF THE PAR DESIGN TO THE STUDY**

It is acknowledged in the body of research done in 2016 like that of Coetzee-VanRooy, Kamwangamalu and Tovaes and Masino and Nino-Zarazua that learner integration is one of the most important issues in a multicultural learning environment because its practice makes the learning process effective and productive. The issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school in South Africa is viewed as vital and it is inseparable from the learners' normal life because it has an impact upon their cognitive development and future success in the labour market (Akhmetshin et al., 2017; Miles & Naidoo, 2017; Walker et al., 2020). In this study I acknowledged that the main aim was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This study considered that the PAR design was an appropriate design to guide the research process with data generation and presentation on the issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The PAR design suits this study because it tends to be factual and to unleash co-researchers' thoughts and to uncover the authority relationships and power divisions in their community. Some scholars maintained that the PAR design is suitable for the research that explores the situations where people feel marginalized and disadvantaged (Mokotjo, 2017 & Parker, 2019). Essentially, with collaborative and active engagement being stipulated in the PAR design, this makes them assume a vital role in a manner that the research process empowers and emancipates people to deal with the problems they are facing in their communities. It is further argued that this design addresses the social inclusion issue in the research process, while creating a space and promoting an equal involvement for everyone involved in the transformative research process (Snyder, 2019; Tracy, 2019 and Giroux, 2020).

Coghlan (2019, p. 42) claims that "PAR design tends to abolish social injustice and spreads justice and equality by emphasizing indispensable issues and emancipation of people in the

society”. On a similar note, Chevalier and Buckles (2019, p. 88) maintain that “PAR design looks for social changes, freedom and release of people in both the research process and in the transformation of the society in general”. On the other hand, Mokotjo (2017, p. 96) proposes that “PAR encompasses the process of changing people’s lives in the society”. While Chidarikire (2017, p. 78) argues that “empowerment and emancipation of the co-researchers through PAR design has a positive influence on the improvement of their lives and their society as a whole”. Therefore, the quotations above simply clarify the relevance of PAR to this study as this design reflects a vigorous care in dealing with the needs and demands of this study. In addition to the objectives of PAR design which are presented in this chapter (section 4.5) reflect the sentiments of this study in exploring the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Also, the objectives are linked to the CER theoretical framework assumptions that underpin this study as presented in Chapter Two (2.3.3). Msimanga (2017, p. 33) states that “CER is the theory that offers a communal working relationship between the researcher and co-researchers of the affected community”. In this regard, I acknowledge that both the PAR design and the CER theoretical framework helped this study to recognise and treat the researcher and co-researchers as equal partners.

Research done in 2016 like that by Dube, Morales and Noel have demonstrated that both PAR and CER recognise the authority disparity in the research process and they strive to equalise the power relations between the researcher and co-researchers. While scholars like Mbambo, Wessels and Wood and Wood in 2019 claimed that PAR is a research design that elevates co-researchers to a standard of being research expert, this testifies to the relevance of this research design to this study since the co-researchers of this study managed to critique the situation of learner integration by sharing their feelings, experiences and knowledge that amounted to a most valuable contribution to this study.

The choice of the PAR design was informed by its characteristics as explained in this Chapter (section 4.6). As already pointed out on three occasions, the design is engaging in nature and it seeks to solve the issue researched through the co-researchers’ voices (Cordeiro et al., 2017; Zuber-Skerritt, 2018; Isaacs et al., 2020). It also advances the emancipation as explained in section 4.6.4, and strives to establish equality for all people involved in the study regardless of their status, position or gender. The relevance of the PAR design is acknowledged throughout

in the discussion of researched phenomenon in relation to the critical issues like promotion of freedom, hope, peace and social justice.

Admittedly, some research done in 2020 such as that by Isaacs et al., Oladeinde et al. and Wheeler et al. assert that PAR design encourages active involvement of co-researchers from diverse backgrounds and considers their opinions, views and experiences as a valuable contribution to the research data. This design is relevant to the study because it emphasises that the research process should start with negotiation between the researcher and co-researchers so as to dilute and diffuse the power dynamic between them. Section 4.9 of the study describes the data generation procedures which involve the negotiation of the days, dates and times in which the researcher and co-researchers agreed on for the data generation process. The PAR design assists this study to create equal spaces for all the co-researchers to share their experiences, knowledge and to exchange ideas in a selected unthreatening environment. This study managed to propose certain ways to influence the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The next section looks at the selection of the research site and the co-researchers.

#### **4.8 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH CONTEXT AND THE CO-RESEARCHERS.**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 87) “selection of co-researchers and research site in qualitative research is purposeful”. The selection of both the research co-researchers and the site is important as they represent the best sources of the information to answer the research questions and to increase the understanding of the phenomenon under study. Therefore, for this study, the research site (location of the study) and the seven co-researchers (the principal of the school), two teachers (male and female) who have been working in the school for more than 10 years and the four grade 11 learners between the ages of 16 and 18) were selected using the purposive, convenience and snowball sampling method. These three selected sampling methods are known as nonprobability sampling techniques employed in a qualitative study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Emerson (2015) explain that the purposive sample is a non-probability sample in which co-researcher’s selection is based on their characteristics and objective of the study. Convenience sampling is also regarded as a non-probability sampling method whereby the co-researchers are selected because of their convenient accessibility and

proximity to the research context (Flick, 2014; Emerson, 2015; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). The snowball sampling method is explained as where the consenting co-researchers are asked to recommend other co-researchers they know who fit the research criteria and who might be willing to participate in the study (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Parker, Scott & Geddes, 2020).

For the purpose of this study, the purposive and convenience sampling method were employed to guide me to select the school where this study was conducted and the principal of the school. With the guidance from the principal of the school the snowball sampling method was used to select the six co-researchers consisting of the two teachers that had been teaching for more than 10 years in the school and the four grade 11 learners.

#### **4.8.1 Research context**

The context of the study is the location or site in which the study takes place (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Hua, 2015; Nwokedi, 2015). Recent research highlights that the research context or site of a study includes various aspects like the socio-political, historical, cultural, organisational and policy factors that influence the contents of study (Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi 2013; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research site “refers to all the categories that [the] research phenomenon falls into” (Mbambo, 2019, p. 131). More specifically, the research site is the determination and expression of the geographical boundaries, population and community in which the study takes place (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Kumar, 2019; Leavy, 2020). The map below shows the geographical location of the Kloof suburb area in which the study took place.



**Figure 4.2:** A map of Kloof Suburb adopted from:  
<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=kloof++suburbs+map>  
[https://www.sa-map.com/kwazulunatal\\_durban.htm](https://www.sa-map.com/kwazulunatal_durban.htm)

Kloof is a leafy upper-class suburb and small town that includes areas like Everton and Kloof village. This suburb extends from the top of Fields Hill and is contiguous with Gillitts, Winston Park, Hillcrest and Forest Hills. Collectively, these suburbs are known as the Upper Highway area or the Outer West Region of Durban city (King, 2013). Moreover, Kloof and the neighbouring suburbs are predominantly English speaking. In addition, the census of 2011 revealed that the population in the main area of Kloof suburb is 29,736 which is approximately 34.51 per square kilometre with 9,389 households which are 272.08 per square km. This population comprises 52 per cent women and 48 per cent men. Kloof suburb has a tourist place of interest known as the Kranzttview Nature Reserve which is the home of the most popular rock-climbing activity in the region.

#### **4.8.2 The selected school**

The selected school where this study was conducted is a high school and for the purpose of confidentiality it was named the Therry High School (pseudonym). Therry High School is a public co-educational high school located in the Kloof suburb in Durban KwaZulu-Natal South Africa. This school is an Ex-Model C school located in areas that are occupied predominantly by whites, followed by Indians and coloureds and a few blacks. It was established in the year

1960 and is known as one of the popular high schools, a co-educational public school offering the best quality education from grades 8 to 12. The school is a forerunner of quality education in Durban with an enrolment of over 700 learners and 50 staff members which includes teachers, administration staff, interns, groundsmen, and aftercare workers.

Therry High is an English-medium school that is run by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and a school governing body. The school is known as a well-resourced school which provides a safe and happy learning environment and also has most of the necessary teaching and learning resources at its disposal with facilities such as a library, a computer room, assembly area, large sports fields and it also offers some extracurricular activities like cricket, volleyball, table tennis and girl guidance. The learner population of Therry High School is estimated to be 700 to 750 learners and it caters for both girls and boys. Most are from the suburb of Kloof and the nearest suburbs like Waterfall, Gillitts, Forest Hills, New Germany, Wyebank and Pinetown. Therry offers IsiZulu and Afrikaans as second languages which are viewed as First Additional Languages in the new Further Education and Training (thereafter, FET) curriculum. Also, the school offers Spanish and French as Second Additional Languages which was permitted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for the learners from grades 9 to 12. Selection of the school was also based on the criteria that related to the multicultural and multiracial ethos of this school. In addition, it is classified as a quintile 1 school, a well-resourced school and it is easily accessible from my house.

The Ethikwin municipality in Durban city has more than 100 Ex-Model C schools, but due to the Covid-19 global pandemic it was hard for the researcher to operate in more than one school for data generation process. Most of the Ex-Model C schools that I tried to send my request to for conducting research, rejected my request because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and most of these schools were trying to prevent the spread of the disease by stopping contacts with people from outside the school. Consequently, this pandemic also caused the teachers and principals of Ex- Model C schools to be full occupied with workloads that give them very little time to involve themselves in extra things like research participation. Therefore, getting an opportunity to conduct research in this school was a golden opportunity which I will always cherish, and I am thankful to all my co-researchers. The next section looks at the selection of the co-researchers.

#### **4.8.3 Selection of co-researchers**

As mentioned under section 4.4 the PAR design employed in the study turned all the people involved in the research into co-researchers. The co-researchers of this study were selected by using three sampling methods which were the purposive and convenience sampling and the snowball sampling methods. In addition, section 4.8 mentioned that this study employed purposive and convenience sampling to select the school as well as the principal of the school. Hence, the principal was purposively selected because she is in charge of managing the school, while the other six co-researchers were selected through the snowball sampling method, and I was guided by the principal to select them. The six co-researchers that I was guided by principal to select included the two teachers who had been working at Therry high school for more than 10 years and through the teachers and principal I managed to select the four grade 11 learners aged between 16 and 18. Some research indicates that the action of targeting a specific co-researcher and asking him or her to assist the researcher in identifying other potential co-researchers is known as the ‘snowball sampling method’ (Patton, 2015; Bryman, 2016 & Leavy, 2017). In same note, Parker et al., (2020) contend that the snowball sampling was named after the practical theory that explains how a ball of snow once it is rolling, automatically picks up more snow along the way and the ball become bigger and bigger.

According to Kirchherr and Charles (2018), Hennink et al., (2020) and Leavy (2020) snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which the sample has characteristics that are difficult to find. This means that an existing co-researcher has to provide referrals to be recruited for the sample required for the study. Furthermore, Emerson (2015), Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016); and Leavy (2020) affirm that the snowball sampling technique is also known as referral sampling because the co-researchers are asked to assist the researcher to identify other potential co-researchers. Gentles, Charles, Ploeg and McKibbin (2015, p. 523) believe that with snowball sampling, “the researcher selects the most productive sample to answer the research questions”. Snowball sampling seemed to be a very good technique for conducting an explanatory or qualitative research study with specific and a small number of co-researchers that represented a specific and relatively big population (Gentles et al., 2015; Leavy, 2020).

All seven co-researchers were selected based on their knowledge, and experiences of the integration phenomenon in the school. Firstly, the principal was selected because she is a



member of the School Management Team (SMT) as well as the School Governing Body (SGB). Therefore, her contribution to this study is very important since she had been in control of running the day-to-day affairs of the school and she had always to ensure that the teachers adhered to all the school rules and policies. Secondly, the two grade 11 teachers (male and female) were selected based on their experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon as they have been teaching in this particular school for more than 10 years. Teachers are the ones who spend a lot of time with learners at school, thus, they managed to share dense information on how learners are integrated within the classroom context as well as outside the classroom. Their responses represented teachers' perceptions regarding the issue of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school in South Africa as they shared some of the information on the challenges teachers face and on the significance of learner integration in their school.

Lastly, the four grade 11 learners were selected based on their knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon as they have been studying in the selected school for four years, are actively involved in the school extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the reason I chose the high school grade 11 learners to be a part of this study was because their cognition is mature enough to articulate the issue of learner integration in the school. Thus, they were able to critique and examine the current situation of integration in their school, and also to describe some events and things that existed in the school in relation to the issue researched. As a result, through their active participation in multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice sessions these learners were able to produce the relevant information and to share knowledge regarding the issue of learner integration in their school and also, they were able to describe their photos verbally.

Consequently, the selected co-researchers were beneficial to this study as they were able to share their ideas and knowledge of their understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, this study managed to draw its findings on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school from the co-researchers' perspectives, expressed through reflections, accounts of experiences, perceptions and opinions. The co-researchers' contributions were considered as important for the success and achievement of this study's aim. The subsection below describes the profiles of co-researchers.

#### **4.8.3.1 Co-researchers' profiles.**

The following are the profiles of all co-researchers.

- **The principal**

Mrs Dalila (pseudonym) is the principal of Therry high school. She is 59 years old. She studied at the University of KwaZulu- Natal (UKZN) and she holds a Further Diploma in Education (History and Political Studies) and an Honours Degree in Education Management. She had worked as a teacher for 34 years and taught History and served as Department Head, and Subject Head of History at Therry high school since 1999. In addition, if she were not a teacher, Mrs Dalila believes she would have taken up a career as a women and children activist or even perhaps as a lawyer.

- **The teacher (male)**

Mr Ibrahim (pseudonym) is the male educator teaching grade 11 learners. He has a teaching experience of twenty years at this school. He serves as a head of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) and also as a member of the Learners' Support Team (LST) within the school. Mr Ibrahim studied at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and he holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Economics, Accounting and Commerce. In addition, if he were not a teacher Mr Ibrahim believes he would have taken up a career as a writer or as a journalist.

- **The teacher (female)**

Mrs Munira (pseudonym) is the female educator who has been teaching grade 11 learners for more than twelve years. She holds a Masters in Educational Psychology which she obtained at UKZN. She also serves as a member of LST. She is one of the senior teachers at the school; hence the SMT chose her to be a member of the SDT within the school.

- **The learner co-researchers**

All learners are grade 11 learners at Therry high school. These learner co-researchers were advised first to return their completed consent forms signed by their parents or guardians. The

participation in this study was voluntary as the learners chosen showed an existing interest in the topic of the study. They were two girls and two boys, and this selection was deliberately intended to gain diverse gender perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon researched. The reason I chose only grade 11 learners was because they are regarded as older learners at school who were available compared to the grade 12 learners who had to prepare for the Matric examinations. Again, grade 11 learners had been within the school much longer when compared to other learners from the lower grades. The rapport established between the researcher and co-researchers further paved the friendly and smooth way for data generation as discussed in the section 4.9.

All the learner co-researchers were given an opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms. This was done because the researcher finds it as important for the co-researchers to choose their own pseudonyms because they are active beings with potential and abilities to inform and construct their own learning. So as active co-researchers, giving them the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms was regarded as a respectful way of inviting them to assume some ownership of the study and also to enable them to make a significant contribution as active co-researchers. Thus, the learner pseudonyms were profiled as follows:

The first learner is **Umbrella** (pseudonym) she is a 16-year-old Indian girl who choose to be called a ‘multicolour umbrella’ because she believes it depicts her colourful personality. The second learner is **Bridge**, a 17-year-old black African girl and she chose to be named Bridge as she holds a strong belief in the power of connection in relationships. Bridge further claimed that she united two cultures: one from her home context and another from the school context. Yet, she always consciously seeks to facilitate an exchange between them. **Star** is the third learner, a 17-year-old white boy. He chooses to be called a Star because he believes in shining in his own light. He further claimed not to be restricted by darkness or any other obstacles from being a light to shine. The fourth learner is **Eagle**, an 18-year-old coloured boy and he expressed his feelings that he likes this pseudonym Eagle because he is a free spirit. He further claimed that his inner wings always allow him to fly through barriers and to soar to the new heights. He also argues that the Eagle in him helps him to fly above any storm that comes his way.

## **4.9 DATA GENERATION PROCESSES AND METHODS**

This section describes the processes that were followed in generating data including the methods which were used in these processes.

### **4.9.1 The process of data generation**

As a researcher I was in possession of the all required documents, including the permission letter from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, the ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Department, the permission letter from the principal of Therry High school and the consent letters from the co-researchers and parents/guardians of the learners (see Appendices A-E). Obtaining all these documents gave me the opportunity to contact my co-researchers through the contact details they provided in their consent letters. Moreover, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the co-researchers were contacted via emails, WhatsApp messenger and on the WhatsApp conference call platform which I used to inform them of my intention to have them as my co-researchers for this study. The day, date, time and agenda for the first meeting was then communicated to the co-researchers as the details of the notice for the meeting.

#### **4.9.1.1 The introductory meeting**

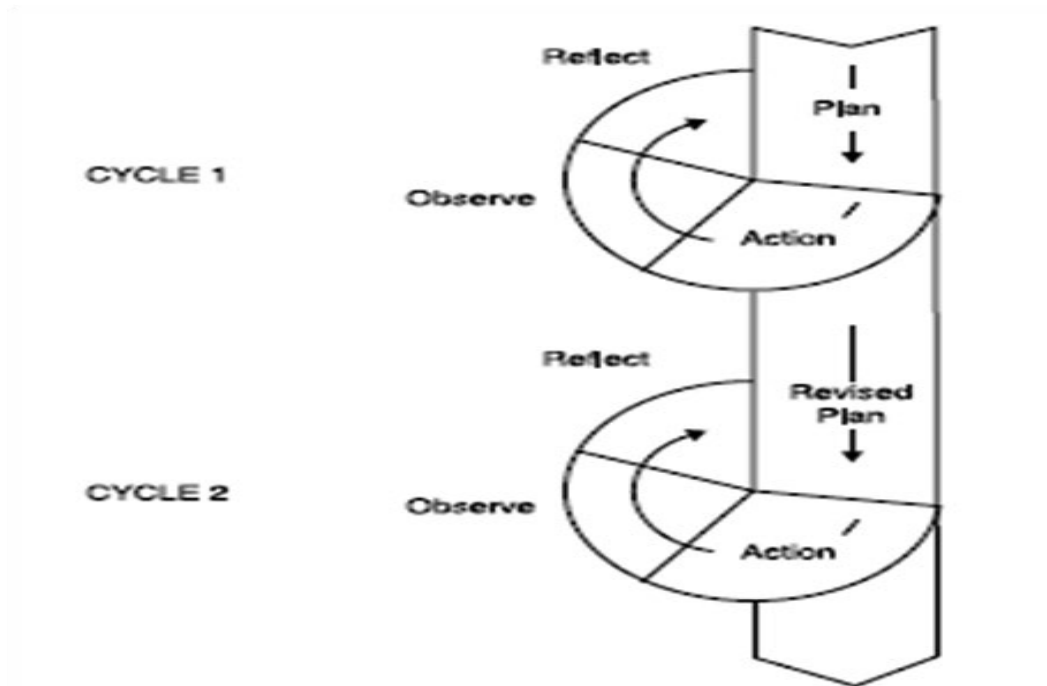
This was the first data generation meeting, held online via a Zoom meeting on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 at 1600 hours in the evening. This was an information meeting in which I was able to inform my co-researchers of my interest in collaborating with them as co-researchers for my PhD study. During this Zoom meeting, I verbally explained to my co-researchers the purpose and focus of the study and the reason why I chose them as my co-researchers. I started by informing them that the aim of the study was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Further, I explained to them that the purpose of the study was to propose ways in which this Ex-Model C School could enhance learner integration in its daily programmes at school. Their understanding and perception on this issue was vital to this study in order for it to be successful. This meeting enabled me to familiarise myself with my co-researchers and to create a rapport with them so as to make them feel at ease.

This first meeting served as our ice breaker because both my co-researchers and I were able to negotiate and plan the data generation process in accordance with the PAR research design that framed this study. Kumar (2019) asserts that PAR-designed studies are interactive in nature and that they are intensely collaborative, engaging and involving all the co-researchers in each process. Creswell and Creswell (2018) affirm that studies that utilised the PAR research design uphold participatory data generation methods including focus group discussions, nominal group discussions, multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice etc. Isaacs et al., (2020) allude to the fact that data in PAR-designed studies are generated by using several participatory methods.

Towards the end of this meeting the co-researchers and I agreed to utilise a combination of three data generation methods: multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice and reflective writing. The co-researchers felt that these three methods were suitable to convey contributions from a school stakeholders group as diverse as themselves. Also, they felt that these methods are beneficial for the study as they were able to propose the ways in which the selected Ex-Model C School could bring about changes regarding the learner integration issue within the school. Scholarly works indicate that the use of multiple methods to generate data is an efficient way of capturing the co-researchers' perceptions whilst generating authentic data on the issue researched (Patkar, 2018; Hennink et al., 2020). The following subsection explains the spiral movement of PAR that has been employed in this study during the data generation process.

#### **4.9.1.2 The PAR spiral movement**

The spiral movement for data generation was a process that was critically examined by Wessels and Wood (2019) and Lindahl (2020) who all concurred that the data generation process under the PAR spiral movement may face difficulty in pointing out the main direction of the research process. This is because the research itself and data generation process “conceivably begins with a casual discussion about the research problem and co-researchers’ experiences of it in the research context” (Lindahl, 2020, p. 84). In addition, Firchow and Gellman (2021) believed that the difficulty of generating data under the PAR spiral movement may be encouraged by the fact that “whatever the origins of the issue researched it has to begin with a group acknowledging shared concern” (Firchow & Gellman, 2020, p. 4). Figure 4.3 below illustrates the spiral movement of PAR that the study employed during the data generation process by using multi-stakeholder meetings.



**Figure 4.3: The PAR spiral movement of data generation under multi-stakeholder meetings as adopted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p. 14)**

The figure above presents the data generation process under the multi-stakeholders' meeting data generation method which empowered the co-researchers to be able to define their perceptions and concerns of the circle 1 and to link them concretely as they began to engage themselves in the PAR phases under circle 2 (Figure 4.3). The following subsections conceptualise each selected method and they elaborate on how each method was employed in this study.

#### **4.9.1.3 Data generation methods and processes as influenced by PAR.**

Data generation is an act of gathering and producing information that is relevant to the research phenomenon (Padget, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In other words, data generation methods are the ways or “techniques which a researcher uses to generate data during the research process” (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 186). In this study data was generated by using three exciting participatory methods, namely Multi stakeholder meetings; the photovoice art-based; and reflective writing activity data generating methods. These data generation methods were selected to address the key research questions that were based on the research design and approach. The research questions were;

- What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- Why is it important for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?

These participatory methods were decided on by both myself and the co-researchers and they enabled us to be fully engaged, active participants and to work collaboratively throughout the research process. Creswell and Creswell (2018); Flick (2018) allude to the fact that qualitative research provides a flexible instrument for the data generation process. The following sections outlined the methods used with regard to PAR design.

#### **4.9.1.4 Multi-stakeholder meetings. Cycle 1.**

A multi-stakeholders meeting is a data generation method mostly used in participatory research to “bring together all the people who are involved in the certain ‘stake’ and provide them with a sense of collaboration and commitment” (Dodds, 2019, p. 112). A study on qualitative research has identified the importance of doing research using multi-stakeholder meetings to generate data (Patton, 2016 & Flick, 2018). Generating data using multi-stakeholder meetings according to Archibald, Ambagtsheer and Lawless (2019, p. 24) brings about “a meaningful engagement and encouragement to the co-researchers’ (stakeholders) ownership of the research process”. This data generation method also allowed the co-researchers to have an authentic perspective as it explores people’s experiences, feelings, behaviour and thoughts (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018; Mbambo, 2019). Some scholars assert that using the multi-stakeholders meeting is the easiest way of generating data because it creates space for dialogue and discussion between the stakeholders which will enable them to establish a roadmap that simplifies and discovers the possible solution to the research problem (Flick, 2018 & Didham, 2020). Therefore, engagement with active participation of the stakeholders during the meetings enabled this study to provide the researcher with rich and raw data. The co-researchers engaged in deep discussions and shared their experiences through open-ended questions. They reflected on these experiences and argued for certain viewpoints, thereby producing in-depth information relating to the phenomenon (learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school).

Research by Didham (2020) identified five essential groups of stakeholders in a school, namely the school leaders (principal), teachers, other school staff members (school administrators), learners and parents or guardians. Hiss and Peck (2020) also argued that stakeholders in education are people involved in the welfare and success of a school and its learners and this includes school administrators, teachers, staff members, learners, parents or guardians and all other officially elected members of the SMT and the SGB. In this study, the multi-stakeholder meetings were planned to correspond to the PAR design phases and included the researcher, the principal, two teachers (male and female) and the four grade eleven learners. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic all the meetings were held through Zoom meetings. The meetings took place on four different days and at times agreed on by all the co-researchers.

The first multi stakeholder meeting was held on Wednesday, 30th of June 2021 after school hours. This was our initial exploratory and introductory meeting, in which an understanding of the research problem and research process was conveyed. This meeting complied with the first phase of PAR which is known as the planning phase. According to Kemmis, et al., (2013) and Kemmis and McTaggart (2014) they affirm that negotiations and discussions of the research phenomenon were constructive and arose during the planning phase by the co-researchers selected to participate in the research process. Thus, the co-researchers were able to work together in exploring, discussing and dialoging on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

In addition, during this meeting I and my co-researchers managed to make a mind map and to develop plans on how to explore all three research questions as mentioned in section 4.9.2. We were also able to formulate some interactions and problem-solving strategies regarding the learner integration situation in a selected Ex-Model C school. Our plans and negotiated interventions were critically aligned with the current situation of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Towards the end of this first multi-stakeholder meeting the co-researchers managed to discuss how the multi-stakeholder meeting data generation method could shape the implementation of these negotiated interventions to enhance learning integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The second multi-stakeholder meeting was held on Friday, 9th of July 2021 at 17:30. This was our action session in which all the proposed plans and interventions were implemented by the



co-researchers. This meeting complied with the second phase of PAR which is known as the action phase. Research by Shongwe (2019); Firchow and Gellman (2021) assert that the action phase of PAR encourages the co-researchers to implement the selected interventions and problem-solving strategies. In other words, all the plans discussed and agreed upon in the planning phase are carried out in practice to solve the problem in the research context. This phase prompts the co-researchers to utilise the multi-stakeholders meeting data generation method in a proper manner to ensure the triangulation of data so as to provide meaningful knowledge on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school (Mbambo, 2019; Walus, 2019).

In this second meeting the co-researchers' expectations regarding the enhancement of learner integration were expressed and they were able to implement actions deliberately and strategically. Furthermore, in this meeting co-researchers managed to formulate an abstract concept regarding learner integration and tested their implications of these new concepts on the enhancement of learner integration in their school's daily programmes. Towards the end of this meeting the co-researchers collaboratively engaged in creating their own understanding and knowledge concerning the issue of learner integration and were able to act upon the implications to improve practices and to advance the knowledge on the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Brown (2021) confirmed that PAR's action phase offers a learning process whereby the co-researchers learn from one another and create knowledge by critically reflecting upon their beliefs, experiences, actions and their common concerns regarding the research phenomenon. In addition, in this meeting co-researchers managed to focus on what works, defend it, amend it and apply it to practice to solve the problem. The co-researchers' consciousness was raised while engaging in the action phase as the issue of learner integration affirmed the needs to be addressed in a selected Ex- Model C school through their actions, perceptions and concerns.

The third multi-stakeholder meeting was held on Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2021. In this meeting the issue of learner integration and negotiated interventions for enhancing it were carefully examined in order to remove any existing concept or practice that was exclusive and discriminatory. This meeting complied with the third phase of PAR which is known as the observe phase. Alvarez-Blanco and Torres (2018); Ayaya et al., (2020); Firchow and Gellman (2021) all concur that the action and observation phase normally occurs simultaneously in the

PAR research design. In supporting this, Brown (2021) affirms that the observation phase in the PAR design is the portion of the action phase in which the changes are outlined, examined, managed and monitored. It is through the observation that the researcher and co-researchers are able to determine the effects of the research methods employed to solve the research problem in the action phase (Schouw et al., 2018; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Pais & Costa, 2020).

During the implementation stage (action phase) I managed to provide accurate monitoring of all the implemented interventions and plans that were carried out in various formats by the co-researchers. This stage was a collaborative research synthesis stage, whereby I and co-researchers were interpreting and analysing the multi-stakeholders meeting method and its negotiated strategies and interventions towards the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The observation phase allowed us to examine the impact of new interventions implemented in the context of the learner integration situation. Williams and Keady (2021) state that varied actions and collections of activities carried out under the action phase are monitored and explained in dialogue and discussion between the researcher and co-researchers so as to discard and reform the created historical controls regimes.

This allowed us to engage actively in a deep discussion regarding the action phase. As a result, co-researchers were able to identify some practices, processes and programmes in their school that needed more attention regarding the enhancement of learner integration. Scholarly works allude to the fact that the observation phase prompts both the researcher and the co-researchers to observe the research context with regard to the phenomenon researched and from their observation they became confident to integrate their common concern into a collective or a common goal (Brown, 2020; Giroux, 2020; Hutton & Heath, 2020).

The fourth multi stakeholders meeting was held on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2021. In this meeting the justification of how the research process was to be carried out was developed. This meeting complied with the fourth phase of PAR which is known as the reflect phase. Wessels and Wood (2019) state that the reflection phase of PAR design supports the re-examining process of the actions that took place in the research. This allows the researcher and co-researchers to rethink their engagement during the data generation phase and to be able to refine the plans, activities and potential actions that were embedded in the research process. Therefore, during this

meeting the co-researchers were empowered, emancipated, transformed as they learned and became aware of the consequences of the changes in the research context and of what should be done to enhance the learner integration in their schools' daily programmes.

During the fourth meeting the co-researchers were able to reflect on what they did in the whole research process and they realised that the impacts of the adjustment and improvement of their abstract concepts in the enhancement of learner integration in their school were not good enough and as a result, both the researcher and co-researchers decided to engage in the second cycle of the PAR spiral movement (cycle 2) so as to improve the research outcomes. Brown (2021) affirms that the reflection phase offers a review session of PAR cycle 1 as a learning process. Mbambo (2019) and Walus (2019) assert that the reflection phase in circle 1 leads to another in which incorporate improvements suggested by the co-researchers in the initial phase to be carried out in the circle 2.

In the fourth meeting the co-researchers not only learned from their mistakes and shortcomings in cycle 1, but they were also able to critique the knowledge-creation process by critically reflecting upon their actions and experiences throughout the research process in the cycle 1. In supporting this, Williams and Keady (2021) also allude to the fact that the reflection phase allows the researcher and co-researchers to “examine, construct then to evaluate the procedures followed in the research process and reconstructing their new understanding and concerns in more vivid images of the situation, the further actions and to see what might now be possible” (Williams & Keady, 2021, p. 15).

In this meeting both the researcher and the co-researchers managed to reflect on their prior knowledge and concerns and linked these to the post knowledge production under cycle 2 of the PAR that was conducted as part of the research process through the discussions, dialogues and sharing of experiences. Research by Cook et al., (2019); Ayaya et al., (2020); and Brown (2021) affirm that the reflection phase is the core and the central part of the PAR research design, as it emphasises the explanation of power, collaboration, knowledge, ethics, emotions and the co-researchers' well-being.

#### **4.9.1.5 Multi-stakeholder meetings. Cycle Two**

Section 4.9.1.2 of this study describes the spiral movement of the data generation under the multi-stakeholder meeting method. The section also presents figure 4.3 that explains the PAR model which was introduced by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Furthermore, the figure on spiral movement of PAR design shows a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting leads to the next stage of planning. Kemmis and McTaggart (1990, p. 71) affirm that “phases under cycle 2 of PAR design are not separated from the previous circle 1, but the research process is embedded in more action planning and reflection of what happened in the cycle 1”. Again, Kemmis et al., (2014) assert that the circle 2 of PAR design is normally shorter because it intends to change results at the end so as to ensure the quality of the research results or findings. The following sections explains the cycle 2 phases as employed through the multi-stakeholder meetings.

#### **4.9.1.6 The revised planning phase in cycle 2**

The fourth multi- stakeholders’ meeting which was based on the reflection of the cycle 1 research process took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, and it led to the agreement and decision from both the researcher and co-researchers to engage in the cycle 2 of the PAR spiral movement so as to improve the research outcomes. The first multi stakeholders meeting in cycle 2 took place on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021, and this meeting was viewed as a revised planning phase in which the researcher and co-researchers continued with the general research aim and agreement on the research methodology to see if they will carry on with the same methods or to change to other methods (Kemmis et al., 2013; Pearson, 2016; Roggerone, 2018).

It is revealed that the revised planning phase in the cycle 2 provides an opportunity for both the researcher and co-researchers to re-examine their ideas and perceptions of what they think might work better than what happened in cycle 1 (Hutton & Heath, 2020). On the same note, some research indicated that the revised planning phase empowers the researcher and the co-researchers to brainstorm on the words, concepts, documents and events that describe the changes they want to see (Williams & Keady, 2021). Furthermore, Ayaya et al. (2020) also maintain that the revised planning phase offers the opportunity to the researcher and co-researchers to discuss and examine the policies, practices and other activities which may have an impact on the improvement of the research process. During this meeting my co-researchers

and I managed to come up with critical discussions concerning the school management issues, curriculum implementation and instructional strategies and how these have an impact on the issue of learner integration in a school. This meeting paved the way and gave us direction with a clear vision of the action phase which influenced the actual transformation procedures.

#### **4.9.1.7 The action phase in cycle 2**

The second multi-stakeholders meeting was held on the Friday 13th August 2021, and this meeting aligned with the action phase of PAR. Recent research confirms that effective action in cycle 2 depends upon the agreement and commitment of both the researcher and the co-researchers on the issues, concepts, documents and events that have an impact on the research problem (Schouw et al., 2018; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Pais & Costa, 2020). Alvarez-Blanco and Torres (2018) state that during the revised planning phase both the researcher and co-researchers created the basic understanding of how they were going to take effective action to improve the research results. Firchow and Gellman (2021) state that the main task in the action phase for cycle 2 is to improve the research problem situation. Thus, this meeting required stakeholders to reflect on and to seek certain ways for the enhancement of learner integration in their school.

Drawing from the submission above, this study contends that the action phase in cycle 2 is the struggle towards improvement of the research results. During this meeting my co-researchers and I managed to respond more effectively to the needs of the targeted influencers such as in curriculum implementation, school management issues and instructional strategies which impacted on the issue of learner integration in their school. We did this by interlinking the formulated abstract concepts from the cycle 1 and paid more attention to what worked, defended it, amended it and applied it in practice to propose the ways in which learner integration could be enhanced. Again, co-researchers' consciousness was raised while engaging in the action phase of cycle 2 as they managed to recall their reflections, observations, plans and previous experiences of actions taken in cycle 1.

Conclusively, action phase in cycle 2 led to the improved coordination between the new concepts for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration and school practices. As a results, both the researcher and co-researchers managed to modify the school management system and services offered including their intervention approaches towards the realisation and

implementation of inclusive education and integration in school. This was done by encouraging more reflective, responsive and often creative approaches to the schools' daily programmes and practices so as to respond to the learner diversity. See chapter 5(5.2) for more explanation of this.

#### **4.9.1.8 Observe phase in cycle 2**

The third multi-stakeholder meeting was held on Friday, 20th of August 2021. This phase requires co-researchers to look carefully at what is happening in the school, and then to describe what has happened and to record what has happened (Freire, 2015; Douglas, 2016; Ngwenya, 2018). As demonstrated in Isaacs et al., (2020, p. 360) "good observation requires looking at what is happening and describing it accurately". Therefore, during this meeting all the negotiated interventions of implementation and realisation of learner integration were carefully examined to remove or to eliminate any existing concept or practice that was considered to be exclusive and discriminatory (Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018; Ayaya et al., 2020; Firchow & Gellman, 2021). Moreover, as mentioned earlier the action and observation phases normally occur simultaneously in the PAR research design (Pais & Costa, 2020; Firchow & Gellman, 2021). The observation phase is viewed as the portion of action phase in which people involved are required to outline, examine, manage and monitor all the changes undertaken (Cook et al., 2019; Walus, 2019 & Brown, 2021).

The observation phase in cycle 2 aimed to provide a sound base for the reflection phase with the "co-researchers producing a widely accepted understanding of what actually happened throughout the research process" (Husni, 2020, p. 115). Thus, through the observation phase the researcher and co-researchers were able to recheck and determine effective ways for the implementation and realisation of learner integration in a selected school. This phase provided the co-researchers with the opportunity to consider and to find new information regarding things that are happening in their school in relation to the understanding and enhancing of learner integration.

During this phase my co-researchers used the available information gathered through their observations and critical discussions to describe the relationship between what they think is occurring and the actual events that are taking place in their school. The co-researchers managed to document the effects of actions taken towards the improvement of learner

integration in their school. Brown (2021) argued that careful observation is necessary because “action will always be limited by some constraints of the research context realities and sometimes these constraints are hard to be clear in advance” (Brown, 2021, p. 10). With regard to this, my co-researchers and I found it necessary to document all the observations so that there will be a documentary basis for our succeeding reflection.

Towards the end of this meeting the co-researchers discussed and shared their observations, perspectives and experiences on how the new concepts and approaches improved the teaching and learning activities in their school. Thus, the observe phase did not only provide co-researchers with the basis for their subsequent reflections of the study process but will also act as guidance in the immediate future improvement of their school.

#### **4.9.1.9 Reflection phase in cycle 2**

The fourth multi-stakeholders meeting was held on Friday, 27th of August 2021. In this meeting the justification of how the second round of the research process had been carried out was declared. The reflection phase in cycle 2 required the researcher and co-researchers to stand back even more and to reflect on what had happened in both cycles 1 and 2 (Wood, 2019; Wheeler et al., 2020). During this meeting both the negotiated interventions and new concepts were evaluated to see how they met the intended agenda of the research goal. Both Verovsek (2018) and Brown (2020) allude to the fact that during the reflection phase things might rarely be seen to go perfectly but this stage usually provides the ways to improve matters in the light of shared experiences and feedback from the co-researchers.

The reflection phase provided both the researcher and the co-researchers with an opportunity to change their intervention approaches as well as their research findings, because this phase usually includes the improvement strategies on research results by strengthening “the continuous evaluation and review of all research process aspects” (Wessels & Wood, 2019, p. 22). The reflection phase in cycle 2 is viewed as a time-consuming phase because it involves more talking, sharing of insights, putting things together or forming a whole and listening to the stakeholders’ different opinions, perspectives and interpretations (Fine & Torre, 2019; Oladeinde et al., 2020). This meeting enabled me and my co-researchers to work together to evaluate the proposed ways for the enhancement of learner integration in the school. Collaboratively, we managed to develop new initiatives and to provide evidence, through our

discussions and sharing of ideas on why we need to understand and enhance learner integration in a selected school.

During this meeting we managed to conduct the reflection phase in a collaborative manner in which co-researchers managed to share their ideas, opinions and perceptions. As a result, we managed to come up with a range of interpretations and meanings of discussed concepts which were considered as themes in the research findings (see section 5.2). Moreover, I contend that all the themes discussed under section 5.2 were developed collaboratively by comparing what we observed with what had been conveyed by all the co-researchers. In addition, the reflection phase allowed the co-researchers to work collaboratively by inviting each other to reflect on what someone had found and all together we participated to add some inputs to it.

This phase needed us to spend more time to think, review and to evaluate the research findings of our observations, actions and negotiations that we had made together and to build a shared knowledge on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The collaboration and shared knowledge generated in this study enhanced the trustworthiness of the research findings and of the usefulness of the research methodology employed in the study (Flick, 2018; Sileyew, 2019 & Leavy, 2020).

#### **4.9.2 Photovoice method.**

This study employed the photovoice method as the second data generation method. Photovoice data generation as a method has popularity and recognition in the two decades since it was proposed by Caroline Wang and Marry Ann Burris in the early 1990's (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg, 2020). It is referred to as a participatory visual methodology that allows individuals to take charge of the photography process and then to voice, describe, reflect and converse about their everyday life experiences with the researched problem (Wang, 2009; Nwokedi, 2019; Milner, 2019). Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) also explain that photovoice is a very strong photographic data generation method which encourages critical dialogue and discussion while creating knowledge. This implies that utilising of photovoice in research could quicken and enhance discussion and it could encourage co-researchers to become more active throughout the research process (Mitchell, 2011; Wang, 2009; Latz, 2017).

Some researchers believe that the photovoice data generation method promotes collaboration and allows active engagement of all the people involved (Lats, 2017; Teti, 2019; Tsang, 2020).



This method seems to be more effective when the research involves vulnerable and marginalised communities that have been silenced in the political arena (Call-Cummings, Hauber-Ozer, Byers & Mancuso, 2019; Shaw, 2020). Furthermore, Lofton and Grant (2021) affirm that the photovoice data generation method allows co-researchers to present their life experiences and feelings that are difficult to express using conventional methods such as interviews. To support this, Miller (2021) suggests that the photovoice data generation method promotes democracy as the people involved are meaningfully engaged in the whole research process.

Labbe, Mahmood, Routhier, Prescott, Lacroix, Miller and Mortenson (2021) affirm that the engagement of people in the photovoice method not only develops their self-awareness and critical consciousness, but it also enhances their socialisation skills and promotes equal participation of all people involved. Khanare (2012); Nwokedi (2019); Lofton and Grant (2021) state that the photovoice method promotes sharing and exchanging of ideas, skills and knowledge among the co-researchers and it enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the issue researched while reflecting on the realities of their life experiences. Milner (2019) asserts that the photovoice method enables the co-researchers to develop critical dialogical discussions and it also helps them to improve their communication skills because this method encourages people to collaborate throughout the research process.

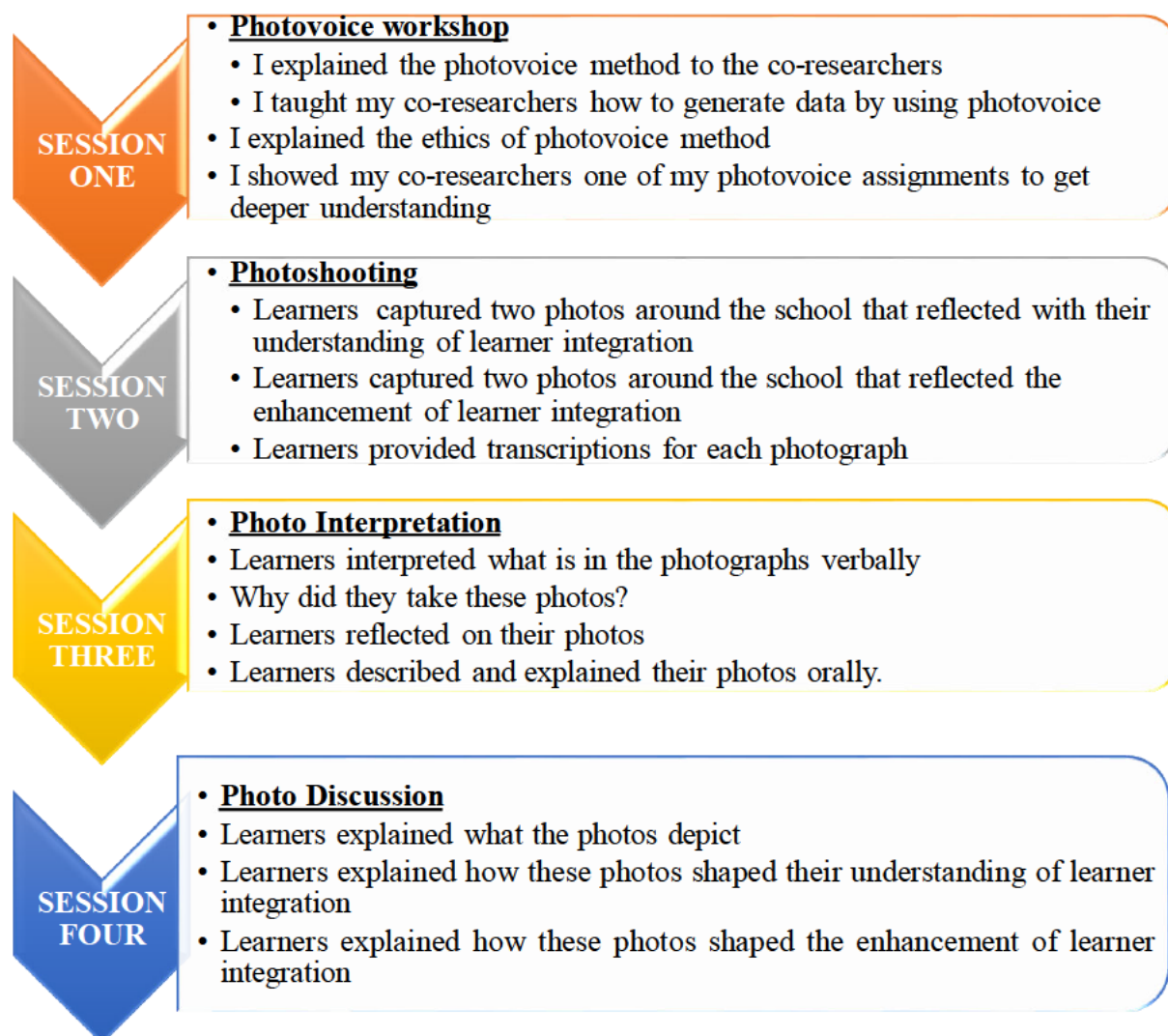
In 2020 some research like that by Golden, Shaw and Tsang agreed that the photovoice method offers the co-researchers an opportunity to interact, discuss and interpret their photos collaboratively. After finishing with data generation in round two under the multi-stakeholder meetings in cycle 2 of the PAR design, the four grade 11 learners could engage in the photovoice sessions within their school. Labbe et al., (2021, p. 48) maintain that the “photovoice method offers an innovative way to triangulate research results due to the multiple streams of data generation process such as photo taking, discussion of photos, interpretation of photos as well as individual reflection of photos taken”. As a result, the co-researchers’ deep discussions of their photographs about the research problem helped this study to produce a shared knowledge concerning the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The next section describes the photovoice process in this study.

#### **4.9.2.1 The photovoice process in the study**

The photovoice method was employed in this study by involving four grade 11 learners at Therry High School. This method was conceptualised as a way to support and supplement the multi-stakeholder meetings' data generation. The data generated in the four photovoice sessions complemented the co-researchers' responses to the research questions during the multi stakeholder meetings in cycle 2 which strove for the improvement of research results. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of photovoice exercise in this study complies with the four PAR design phases (plan, action, observe and reflect). Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic three of the four photovoice sessions (photovoice workshop; photo interpretation and photo discussion) were undertaken through Zoom meetings on the days and at the times that were agreed upon by my co-researchers. The photo shooting session was done by the learners themselves at school during school hours.

By the way, this method allowed me to break the ice of an existing tradition of ways of conducting research that mainly focus on the adult co-researchers only. While employing this data generation method both the researcher and co-researchers were fully aware of the ethical considerations of how to use photographs in the research process. In accordance, Teti (2019); Evans-Agnew and Rosemberg (2020) warned that researchers are accountable of ensuring that all co-researchers involved in photovoice process are physically and mentally unharmed. While “their confidentiality is highly maintained at all levels also they have consented to voluntarily participate in the photovoice research process” (Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg, 2020, p. 24). Thus, the photovoice method enabled the learners to critically think and capture events that influence the issue of learner integration in their school. This method treated them as expert informants who are active in the construction and determination of their own life experiences through pictures (Shaw, 2020 & Tsang, 2020).

Figure 4.4 below describes the photovoice process through its four sessions as employed in this study.



**Figure 4.4: The photovoice process in the study. (Figure designed by the researcher.)**

#### • **Session One: Photovoice Workshop**

This was an introductory session which was held on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2021 through the online Zoom meeting around 16:30, after school hours. In this session I conducted a photovoice workshop with my co-researchers (4 learners) to explain to them about the photovoice method and I explained to them how to generate data by using digital cameras and phone cameras. Furthermore, during this session I managed to share with them a brief PowerPoint presentation that shows some examples of research that have used photovoice methodology. Also, I explained to them some of the ethical guidelines for taking photographs as explained in Wang (1999), Gubrium and Harper (2016), Teti (2019) and Evans-Agnew and Rosenberg (2020).

This session lasted for almost an hour and a half. Towards the end of this session co-researchers were able to identify and develop an imaginative research problem intervention that expressed their reflections captured in the cycle 2 of multi-stakeholder meetings and their lives at school. Both I and the co-researchers discussed and agreed on some goals that we intended to achieve at the end of photovoice process.

The photovoice workshop session corresponded with the first phase of the PAR which is known as the plan phase or the preparation phase (Loewenson, Laurell, Hogstedt, D'Ambrouso & Shoroff, 2014; Wessels & Wood, 2019). In the plan phase, the researcher and the co-researchers were given an opportunity to understand the research process and also to establish a structure for involvement and commitment to participate in the PAR research process (Walus, 2019; Brown, 2020). This was evidenced in our first session of the photovoice method where I and my co-researchers were fully engaged and involved in the photovoice workshop in order to gain a good knowledge of the existing information that helped learners to understand how to conceptualise photovoice method in the PAR design. Conducting of the photovoice workshop with my co-researchers did not only grant them an opportunity to think deeply about the crucial elements for learner integration in school; but it also created an awareness of the need for them to be wary of the hindrance factors which may threaten the process of generating data by using the photovoice method.

- **Session Two: photoshooting**

This was the second session of the photovoice method where co-researchers were actively involved in capturing different images/photos around their school. This session lasted for one week from 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021. For this session learners were asked to use their phones to capture two photographs of the events happening around the school that shaped their understanding of learner integration. In addition, learners were asked to take two more photographs of things around the school that had an influence on the enhancement of learner integration in the school. In other words, each learner was supposed to capture four photographs that were based on their experiences, knowledge and thoughts about their understanding of learner integration and on how learner integration can be enhanced in their school.

This photoshooting session aligns with the second phase of the PAR which is the action phase in which the intended plan is implemented and carried out in the research context (Giroux, 2020; Pais & Costa, 2020). Firchow and Gellman (2021) assert that the PAR's action phase allows the people involved to implement the interventions to generate data. Thus, during this session co-researchers actively participated in the actual action which involved taking pictures/photos of the things that seemed to have an influence on their understanding and on the enhancement of learner integration in their school. Cook et al., (2019) and Ayaya et al., (2020) all state that PAR studies should involve action that encourages equal distribution of power among the people involved. The photoshooting session was an ideal exercise for the current study as the learner co-researchers were able to engage in action that influenced the sharing of responsibilities and equal power distribution in the creation of knowledge in this study (Hutton & Heath, 2020; Pais & Costa, 2020).

Call-Cummings et al., (2019) and Nwokedi (2019) add that photo-shooting goes hand-in-hand with photo transcription. Tsang (2020) also affirms that photo transcription in photovoice is a portion of a photo-shooting session in which the message conveyed in the photograph is transformed from spoken words or thoughts into writing. Immediately after they finished the photo-shooting session, co-researchers were asked to provide one paragraph of transcription for each photo they took. Photo transcription is crucial in the photovoice method because it encourages self-empowerment of the co-researchers by providing them with an opportunity to express their thoughts, understanding and experiences of their photographs through writing. (Mukumbang & Vanwyk, 2020; Labbe et al., 2021).

- **Session Three: photo interpretation**

After they had completed the photoshooting process, on Monday 20<sup>st</sup> September 2021 co-researchers sent me all their photographs which I saved in different folders by using their pseudonyms. A photo interpretation was the third session of the photovoice method which took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2021. In this session each of the co-researchers was given an opportunity to interpret and explain the meaning, understanding and the intentions behind each photograph they took. This session was done through the online Zoom meeting facility and it lasted for two hours. During this session I uploaded one file after another (as saved in my laptop by using their pseudonyms) and asked the learner to interpret his or her photographs verbally

and to tell us what is in the photograph, why he/she took that photograph and how it shaped the understanding and enhancement of learner integration in the school. The photo interpretation session is regarded as photo storytelling because the session allows the co-researchers to speak, explain the message that is being conveyed through the photograph (Green et al., 2018). Mukumbang and VanWyk (2020) assert that during the photo interpretation session the photos taken are used to promote dialogue, discussion and comments from all the co-researchers. CohenMiller (2018) and Golden (2020) contend that interpretation of visual art data such as that which is involved in the photovoice exercise provides an opportunity for co-researchers to cultivate their deep thoughts and high levels of thinking while encouraging collaboration and creativity in the production of knowledge.

The photo interpretation session complied with the third PAR's phase which is Observe. Brown (2021) feels that the observation phase in the PAR design is the portion of the action phase in which the action taken is explained, outlined, examined, managed and monitored. This means that through observation the researcher and co-researchers are able to determine the effects of the research methods employed to solve the research problem in the action phase (Schouw et al., 2018; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Pais & Costa, 2020). During this session I monitored the oral discussion by instructing my co-researchers to comply with and to follow the questions that I prepared to guide them while interpreting their photographs. Wang and Burris (1997); Teti (2019); Rosemberg and Evans-Agnew (2020) believe that the researchers' guidance is vital and that it triggers co-researchers' memories and experiences to be expressed in verbal discussions during the photo interpretation session. Thus, the following questions were used to monitor and examine my co-researchers' thoughts, experiences and interpretation during this session.

- What is in the photograph?
- Why did you take the photographs?
- How does this photo shape the understanding and enhancing of learner integration? (See Appendix F).

During the observe phase I managed to act as a facilitator whereby I maintained a critical dialogue with my co-researchers to share information concerning their photographs. I encouraged the co-researchers to be good listeners when someone is interpreting his / her

photographs. This helped me to create a non-judgemental environment and motivated the speaker to share his / her views with others in the group.

- **Session Four: photo discussion**

The photo discussion session was our last session which was held on Thursday 30th of September 2021. This session took place as a group discussion whereby all the co-researchers were allowed to speak and add views regarding other learner's photographs so as to gather more information. The session was conducted through an online Zoom meeting on the day mentioned above around 16:30 pm after school hours. This session was audio recorded with the consent of my co-researchers (See Appendix B). Wass, Anderson, Rabello, Golding, Rangi and Etauati (2020) assert that the photo discussion session in photovoice creates a groundbreaking approach to PAR studies as it allows co-researchers to describe more about their photographs and to provide new and positive ideas. Labbe et al., (2021) and Miller (2021) allude to the fact that the beauty of photovoice is seen when all people involved come together and share their stories, experiences and thoughts and to tackle their adverse situation. Lofton and Grant (2021) argue that photo discussion in photovoice has to be centred on the photographs taken and ideas that co-researchers wished to convey during the photovoice process.

I uploaded/shared photographs on my Zoom screen and requested the co-researchers to engage in discussions regarding the photographs in terms of their understanding of them and how they could be used to enhance learner integration in their school. Each learner co-researcher was given an opportunity to explain what the photographs meant to them in relation to their understanding and enhancing of the learner integration phenomenon. This photo discussion session was aligned to the fourth phase of the PAR design which is reflect. Snyder (2019) and Wheeler et al., (2020) argue that the reflection phase in the PAR design allows co-researchers to evaluate what they and others have done in the action phase and to evaluate the intellectual decisions they have made to reach new understandings that had become the basis for their life experiences. Fine and Torre (2019) state that it is through the reflection phase that the co-researchers are getting an opportunity to discuss and to know whether or not their participation had evoked particular feelings in others and how that contribution was viewed by others.

Oladeinde et al., (2020) confirm that reflection in PAR is often the most vital phase because it promotes both social collaboration and the personal development of co-researchers.

During the photo discussion session co-researchers got an opportunity to hear from others concerning their photographs. Also, they managed to advise each other to choose photographs that had the best influence on shaping of their understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Furthermore, this session allowed co-researchers to share their different perspectives and perceptions of the photographs taken by their fellows. Towards the end of this session, co-researchers managed to supportively engage each other in critical discussions that promoted a dialogue and generation of knowledge concerning the issue of learner integration in their school. As a result, through the photo discussion session I managed to monitor their behaviour, body language and especially facial expression, responses and attitudes while discussing their photographs. Also, I conveyed different perceptions, stories and thoughts not only from the photographs, but also this session offered an opportunity to my co-researchers to reflect on the different programs that took place in their school and to identify their strengths, weakness and concerns regarding the learner integration in school.

#### **4.9.3 Reflective writing activity**

The third and last data generation method employed in this study was a reflective writing activity. This study employed this method to gather feedback from all the co-researchers concerning their experiences of engaging in multi-stakeholder meetings in both cycles 1 & 2, learners' experiences of engaging in photovoice sessions and the whole research process in general. A reflective writing activity is described as an act of writing for a specific time as well as merely jotting down whatever comes to mind without being concerned about which word to use or with editing whatever has been written (Kolbe & Rudolph, 2018). Nwokedi (2019) also notes that a reflective writing activity allows the co-researchers to reflect on the whole research process. By participating and engaging in the reflective writing activity, the co-researchers were able to evaluate the data generation instruments employed in this study by writing down their experiences, thoughts, beliefs and views regarding the whole research process they had engaged in.

Mbambo (2019) argued that reflective writing is a form of creative writing in which the co-researchers examine the research process through self-reflection. Pithouse-Morgan (2017)



states that reflective writing is a typically personal activity in which co-researchers describe the insights they gained by engaging and participating in the research process. In other words, a reflective writing activity is a form of writing that expresses the co-researchers' point of view regarding their journey of growth in knowledge (Khanare, 2015; Hewitt, 2017). The reflective writing activity in this study coincided with the PAR research design which required the co-researchers to reflect on the whole process of engaging and participating in the research process, specifically in multi-stakeholder meetings and in the photovoice exercise. On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2021 which was the last day of term three, after the school hours I conducted a Zoom meeting with my co-researchers and I asked them to provide me with a one page Microsoft word document to tell me "What they had learnt from participating in the multi-stakeholder meetings or photovoice sessions?" I gave my co-researchers one week to complete this activity and to send it to me individually through my email address which was given to them in the consent letters (See Appendix C-E). During the waiting time, I encouraged them not to copy each other rather, everyone should write the reflection based on their personal experiences. I also made some few WhatsApp calls to gather their reflections verbally to ensure that they provided me with relevant reflective writings.

The reflective writing activity required co-researchers to comply with the following questions provided for their guidance while writing it.

- a. Is there any extra photo or anything that we have not discussed that you think is relevant in relation to how learner integration in a selected Ex Model C school could be enhanced?
- b. Are there any other ways or practices that you think could influence both the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in this school?
- c. What was your experience of engaging in multi-stakeholder meetings (cycle 1 & 2); or in the photovoice sessions?
- d. Write how you felt throughout the research process.
- e. Write about your experiences of participating in this research process.

On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 my co-researchers returned their reflective writings to me. As noted before these were very interesting, very personal and unique. Through this self-reflection writing activity, the co-researchers were empowered and were consciously aware of some

impediments related to the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. As a result, through freedom of expression that was given to them, this enabled my co-researchers to create knowledge that is concerned with liberating people, especially learners with constraints in their social structure at school. Moreover, through the reflective writings the researcher managed to identify what the co-researchers regarded as shared and common concerns regarding the learner integration issue in Therry High school. Chapter 5(5.2) of this study, presents and interprets the research findings that influence the possible solutions regarding the issue of learner integration in this school.

#### **4.10 DATA ANALYSIS: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The data generated from the multi-stakeholder meetings, the photovoice visual art exercise and the reflective writing activity were analysed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Asghar (2013); Fairclough (2013); and VanDijk (2015) define CDA as a type of discourse analysis that deals with social problems which seriously threaten the lives and well-being of people in society. In most cases, studies that apply CDA incline to be analytical and transformative and help to uncover the social problems that arise from the misuse of power by some social institutions and politicians, based on gender or cultural factors (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 2013; Gee, 2014). The main focus of CDA in educational research is on providing tools for addressing the challenges in systems and practices in schools and other educational institutions (Asghar, 2013; Gonsalvez, 2013).

Application of CDA in a study attempts to bring theory and the critical paradigm together to interpret, describe and explain the ways in which discourses are constructed and operated in the research context (Woodak & Meyer, 2009; Mogashoa, 2014; Mullet, 2018). This means that the critical analyst has to describe in detail and be aware of socio-political issues in the research context in order to understand the complex nature of the social phenomenon being researched (Wodak & Mayer, 2009). They go further to argue that it is important for a critical researcher to “conceptualize the transformative theory in a study so as to understand and to be able to transform knowledge in a social institution like a school” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 7). Therefore, in order to ensure coherence of social transformation in a selected Ex-Model C school, this study embraced the crucial features of the CER theoretical framework that frames this study, the critical paradigm assumptions and the PAR research design in utilising CDA to

explain, describe and interpret the ways in which the issue of learner integration is perceived in the selected Ex-Model C school. In addition, CDA is a crucial component under the critical paradigm which also was the perspective from which this study was conducted.

Some scholars believe that critical participatory research and CDA are both socially committed paradigms that address different challenges in educational sites through a range of theoretical perspectives (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). In like manner, Rogers, Schaenen, Schott, O'Brien, Trigos-Carrillo, Starkey and Chasteen (2016) affirm that CDA is a research tool that helps a researcher to understand the data generated from multiple data generation methods, which are in the form of pictures or images, spoken and written language. CDA is primarily positioned to help the critical researcher to analyse the data that are presented in co-researchers' voices, and written texts (Fairclough, 2013; VanWyk, 2015). Furthermore, VanDijk (2015) maintain that there are three levels of doing CDA, namely textual analysis, discursive practices analysis and sociocultural analysis. This also was explained in Mullet (2018) and also supported by Wood (2020). Fairclough (2013) states that the three levels of CDA are primarily interested in describing, interpreting and explaining in detail how the discourse is constructed in the research context. Rogers et al., (2016); Mabela, Mann and Ditsele (2020) agree that the first level of CDA allows the analyst to describe the relationship among the texts and their interactions, the second level goal is to interpret the configuration of discourse practices and the third level "helps the analyst to use descriptions and interpretations to offer an explanation of why and how social practices are constituted and transformed in the way that they are" (Rogers et al., 2016, p. 371). The following sections stipulate the levels of CDA for the data analysis procedures as employed in the study.

#### **4.10.1 CDA Level 1: textual analysis**

Van Dijk (2015); and Mullet (2018) explain the first level of CDA, which is textual analysis, as the analysis of data that are generated in forms of spoken words, written texts and pictures or images. At this level the analysts are required to describe the relationship existing among the data generated by using language (both spoken and written) to explain their interactions (Rogers et al., 2016). CDA is referred to as an interdisciplinary approach that sees language as a form social practice (Fairclough, 1989, 2013). This implies that CDA is the analysis that mainly uses the written texts and spoken words to examine the social and political domination in the society (Gordon, 2013; Wodak & Mayer, 2015). To support this, Fairclough (1997); Gee

(2013); and Chidarikire (2017) assume that language in CDA is viewed as being socially constructed.

Some critical discourse analysts like Habermas claim that textual analysis in CDA views language as a medium of domination and social force (Young, 1990; Habermas, 1992; Klein & Huynh, 2004). At this level I managed to transcribe all of the existing textual data such as reflective writings, my field notes and the audio recordings during the multi-stakeholder meetings and the photovoice sessions in order to see their relationship and interaction. Fairclough (2013); and VanWyk (2015) allude to the fact that CDA ensures the transparency in the relationship of textual technique data and point out the related texts that attempt to define, examine, position and address the issue being researched. Thus, the textual analysis helped me to understand the issue of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school through the way it was mediated by co-researchers' thoughts, ideologies and experiences which were expressed in both written and spoken language.

#### **4.10.2 CDA Level 2: discursive practice analysis**

The second level of CDA is known as discursive practice analysis, which focuses mainly on interpreting the configuration of discourse practices in a selected institution (Wodak & Meyer, 2015; Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019). In this second level of CDA the main intention is to reflect on the things that shaped, produced, distributed and circulated the current ethical practices of an institution (Mullet, 2018). Wood (2020) claims that discursive practice analysis helps critical analysts to interpret the social practices of the people within the institution. Lester, Lochmiller & Gabriel (2016) maintain that the level 2 of CDA aims to explore systematically the relationship of causality and determination between people in the institution and the discursive practices of that institution. A critical analyst needs to be fully aware of the events, structures, relations and processes of a researched institution so as to be able to investigate “how such practices, events, and structures are ideologically shaped by relations of power among the people of that institution” (Lester et al., 2016, p. 44). The discursive practices analysis interprets the nature of relationships between people in a researched institution like a school by making judgements about the value and truthfulness of texts or documents as well as their conversations during the data generation process (Mullet, 2018; Wood, 2020).

Level 2 of the CDA should provide an analyst with a higher awareness of the hidden structures that exist within the researched institution that promote some conditions and which contribute to the research problem (Wodak & Mayer, 2015; Lester et al., 2016; Rogers et al., 2016). At this level of analysis, I managed to identify categories of culture and shared patterns of social interaction between my co-researchers. Also, this level of analysis helped me to determine the school's accepted protocol discourses that act as general classifications of particular roles played by my co-researchers. These protocols tend to shape the ways in which my co-researchers behave, interact, think, speak and believe certain things. (Arce-Trigatti & Anderson, 2020). The discursive practices analysis helped me to see very clearly the constraints governing the relationships between my co-researchers and the school system because most of the time even during our informal conversations or interactions my co-researchers seemed to act according to the schools' rules and regulations as well as the school's culture preferences.

Effectively, this level enabled me to identify the common shared discursive resources such as concepts, phrases, patterns of talking and ideological beliefs of my co-researchers through their photographs, reflective writings and analytical interpretation of their thoughts, perceptions and contributions. Our Zoom meetings allowed me and my co-researchers to interact visually and I managed to detect social configurations such as anger, aggression, anxiety and agitation that were influenced by things like stress of engaging in the cycle 2 of the PAR design, including stubborn behaviour of some learners during Zoom meetings as well as the differences in social structures and relationships between my co-researchers. Level 2 of the CDA helped this study to draw up, interpret and analyse its findings in relation to the policies, practices and institutional management as multidimensional processes in a selected school. Chapter 6(6.2) discusses and synthesises the findings of the study that employs a range of discourses resources that have a significant impact on the study in creating knowledge and understanding of learner integration in this school.

#### **4.10.3 CDA Level 3: sociocultural practices analysis**

The third level of CDA is sociocultural practice analysis, and the main concern here is to “offer a meaningful explanation of why and how some sociocultural practices are constituted within the institution” (Chung, 2021, p. 12). Rogers et al., (2016) also affirm that the third level of CDA uses descriptions and interpretations to offer an explanation of why and how social practices are constituted and transformed in the way that they are. Mabela et al., (2020) allude

to the fact that level 3 of the CDA intends to unpack the hidden ideologies of discourse that were adopted over time and have become so familiar, as to be perceived as acceptable to all people in the institution.

Lyon and Hunter-Jones (2019) claim that level 3 of the CDA assumes that people are experiencing multi-faceted situations of unequal access to linguistic and social resources that are controlled institutionally and that this is why most education researchers turned to the sociocultural analysis of the CDA as a way of making sense of the ways in which people understand and make meaning of various issues in the educational context (Gordon, 2013; Mogashoa, 2014; Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019). It is agreed that that level 3 of the CDA is primarily interested in a selection motivated by the endeavour to understand pressing social issues that seemed to impact peoples' lives in a selected institution (Mullet, 2018 & Wood, 2020). Some research also affirmed that level 3 of the CDA was mainly concerned with the issue of power and justice and consequently the critical analyst needs to put more emphasis on the transformation agenda of all the issues related to the oppression or discrimination that is based on race, class, religion as well as gender in a research context (Fairclough, 2013); Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). In essence, research by Chung (2021) affirms that level 3 of the CDA is meant to provide an analyst with higher awareness of the hidden motivations behind the research problem. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the main intention of the level 3 of the CDA is to describe, interpret and explain why and how the existed social practices are constructed, shaped and transmitted in a selected institution (Rogers et al., 2016; Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019) This level of analysis helped me to explain how social construction in a research context shapes knowledge and understanding of the issue researched together with the social identities and relationships between people within the selected Ex-Model C school. The sociocultural practices analysis provided the dense information for the third research objective which examined the need and importance for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

This level of analysis enabled me to understand the conditions behind the current situation of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. It also made me realise that the essence of this issue and its solution lies in the assumptions of all the stakeholders at the school. Some research done in 2020 like that by Arce-Trigatti and Anderson; Mabela et al.; and Wood together maintained that the level 3 of the CDA is intended to reveal unspoken and unwritten

aspects that are imbedded in the issue being researched. Through the sociocultural practices analysis, I managed to explore some of impediments to learner integration, like the monolithic tendency in school programmes and lack of management support that were silent factors, either hidden or endemic to the dominant discourse intended to maintain the status quo. The analysis of socio-cultural practices in a selected Ex-Model C school context relied mainly on the text, discussion and interpretation of discursive practices that described power relations and social interaction of people in a selected school. As demonstrated in Chung (2021) that both textual and discursive practices intend to clarify the social and political inequalities that are involved in issues of class, age, gender, race or ethnic group in the whole social structure. Through the insight and assumptions of the PAR design and the CER theoretical framework and critical paradigm this study managed to deal with pluralist nature of the research and constitute power relations between the co-researchers during the data generation and analysis process.

The data analysis resulted in the construction of knowledge regarding the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This also involved diverse discourses that transverse a range of textual information from the legislation and policy documents which were introduced by the South African government towards the realisation of inclusivity and integration in South African schools. These official documents helped this study to point out the similar and contradicting themes that were identified by co-researchers in order to see the importance and essence of the research findings. The next section discusses the trustworthiness issues of the study.

#### **4.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS ISSUES OF THE STUDY**

Research by Shongwe (2019) and Levitt, Morill, Collins and Rizo (2021) allude to the fact that a quantitative researcher uses measurements to ensure the validity of the study, while a qualitative study uses four criteria of trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. In any qualitative research, the researcher uses these four criteria to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study results. Basias and Pallalis (2018) and CohenMiller (2018) affirm that these four criteria are employed in a qualitative study to ensure its validity and trustworthiness. Leung (2015) together with Merriam and Tisdell (2015) believe that in order to consider the study's trustworthiness, proper methods of

data generation and data analysis have to be in place. This suggests that through proper data generation methods the qualitative study is likely to verify the validity and trustworthiness of the study. Trustworthiness of the study refers to the tools to check and to determine the degree of truthfulness and value of the research findings (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Basias & Pallalis, 2018; CohenMiller, 2018). The study aimed to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex- Model C school. To ensure and enhance its validity and reliability of the research findings this qualitative study outlined the four criteria of trustworthiness as follows:

#### **4.11.1 Credibility**

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that in order for the qualitative study to enhance its credibility the researcher needs to select an appropriate research context and appropriate co-researchers who will produce authentic information regarding the researched issue. Nwokedi (2020) maintains that credibility is when the research findings reveal the realities and lived experiences of the co-researchers in the research context. Silvean, (2020) affirms that a qualitative study improves the credibility by employing several data generation instruments which constantly influence observation, active participation, probing, and triangulation as well as frequent meetings that should encourage discussions and the exchange of knowledge. Moreover, the study employed three data generation methods, namely multi stakeholder meetings, photovoice visual art-based and reflective writing, thus the methodological triangulation was used to enhance the study credibility. These three methods complemented each other and were employed collaboratively and encouraged co-researchers to be active in the research process so as to ensure credibility of the study. The transcription of data generated was precisely and intentionally done by me to avoid any misinterpretation or poor coding of data. Furthermore, after outlining the responses of the themes that emerged, across the data generated the researcher shared them with co-researchers for them to check if anything was omitted. Also, data presented in the study ensured expression of the perspectives and verbal descriptions of co-researchers' perceptions to support findings (Ritchie et al., 2013; Yin, 2015; Flick, 2018). This demonstrated clarity in terms of thought processes during data analysis and subsequent interpretations and also enabled the active engagement of co-researchers with the researcher to reduce research bias (Noble & Smith, 2015; Tracy, 2019; Levitt et al., 2021).



*Triangulation* was achieved between the transcriptions of multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice and reflective writing to validate the data that were generated from these data generation methods. This study valued the co-researchers' points of view and experiences and I ensured that I captured all the information from the multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice sessions (photo interpretation) by audio recording all the sessions with the permission from my co-researchers as one of the research ethics (Cohen et al., 2013; Ritchie et al., 2013 & Smith, 2015). The researcher also kept a meticulous record using an audio recorder and field notes to provide a clear decision trail and to ensure that the interpretations and analyses of co-researchers' perceptions were consistent and transparent (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Leung, 2015; Smith, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). To enhance the reliability of this study all the records, transcripts, profiles and reflections of co-researchers were returned to them to check and confirm the correctness of the interpretations. The data and findings presented in this study were first verified and approved by co-researchers and this ensured that no contribution was left out or manipulated. Creswell and Creswell (2018) pointed out that it is important for the co-researchers to be given an opportunity to verify and to check all the information based on their contributions to the study before revealing them.

#### **4.11.2 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be corroborated by future researchers who follow the detailed decision trails used by this researcher (Padgett, 2016; Patton, 2017; Leavy, 2020). Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that it is important for the qualitative researcher constantly to record each step in the research process and activities employed to prove the trustworthiness of the research results. Nwokedi (2020, p. 146) affirms that to ensure dependability of the study "the qualitative researcher needs to do a detailed recording of the research design, methodology and all activities involved during the data generation process". Levitt et al., (2021) state that the study can enhance the dependability by describing in detail its main aim and by showing clearly the motives and strategies employed towards the realisation of that aim. This study ensured dependability by addressing the research questions clearly and by providing thick information on the issue of learner integration. This study managed to draw the findings from the co-researchers' point of view by valuing their verbatim quotes, their photographs and their perceptions from their reflective writings.

#### **4.11.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability is the process of informing how well the credibility, transferability and dependability have been enhanced in a study (CohenMiller, 2018; Parkar, 2018; Ragab, 2018). The confirmability of the study is enhanced when the researcher clearly proves that the research findings are connected to the realities of co-researchers' real lives within the research context (Hennink et al., 2020; Levitt et al., 2021). Therefore, during the research process the researcher needs to be reflective, maintaining a sense of awareness and an open mindedness so as to be able to explain the research results in relation to the hidden realities of the research context (Sileyew, 2019; Leavy, 2020; Silverman, 2020). This study employed multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice visual art-based and reflective writing to achieve triangulation of the data generated. Furthermore, all the meetings, dialogue and discussions were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. In addition, I used my field notebook to note their facial expressions, their feelings as well as their gestures and posture during the Zoom meetings. I also made a conscious effort to follow-up their clarifications, explanations of their photographs, metaphors and the slang language which also enriched the data interpretation and substantiated claims of my research findings.

#### **4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The authenticity of any research study is affirmed by its ethical considerations throughout the research process (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2013; Gajjar, 2013; Roberts & Allen, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This includes the process of data generation and analysis as well as protection of co-researchers' rights in the whole process. Leavy (2017, p. 74) maintains that a "PAR research project always involves ethical dimensions that prioritize co-researchers' safety throughout the research process". Lincoln (2018, p. 138) affirms that "the greater concern in any PAR research study are the rights and welfare of the co-researchers" because this research design intends to encourage active participation and their involvement in the process of transformation of the research context. Sileyew (2019, p. 159) asserts that "an ethical consideration in a research study increases the value and trustworthiness of the findings". It is important for the researcher to consider what is right and wrong during the research process. The following section stipulates the ethical principles involved in securing research permission,

guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, obtaining informed consent and protection of co-researchers from harm in this study.

#### **4.12.1 Ethical clearance and research permission**

This study sought and obtained the clearance form from the UKZN where I was registered as a full-time PhD candidate. Thus, the application for ethical clearance was submitted to UKZN Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee and this study was approved by the protocol reference number HSSREC/00002711/2021, which is valid until 16-06-2022 (see Appendix, A). This was followed by seeking the permission from KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE). I wrote a letter to the UKZNDOE to seek the permission to conduct research in the selected school. The permission was granted in a document reference number 2/4/8/10007, which is valid until 01-08-2023 (see Appendix, B). I attach these two permission letters from the UKZN and KZNDOE with the letter for principal of Therry high school to ask her for the permission to conduct research in this school (see Appendix, C). The principal responded positively by granting me written permission to conduct this study in Therry high school.

#### **4.12.2 Informed voluntary participation**

The principal, teachers and four grade 11 learners volunteered to participate in the study. I provided them with informed consent letters which contained a declaration page for them to sign (see Appendix D). In addition, I provided the learners with letters to seek permission from their parents or guardians because they are minor co-researchers. The letters were written in simple English to explain the aim and objectives of the study to the parents and guardians (see Appendix E). As a result, all four learners were granted permission by their parents and guardians to participate in this study as minor co-researchers. Some literature asserts that it is important for the co-researchers to be informed of the main aim of the research study with its desired outcomes so that she or he can make an informed decision on whether to participate or not (Dube, 2016; Flick, 2018 & Schoonenboom, 2018).

Leavy (2020, p. 112) declares that “no one should be forced to participate in the research study process”. He further argues that “those who wish to be terminated from the research process should be allowed to do so without any restriction” (Leavy, 2020, p. 113). I explained clearly all of the ethical issues and their rights as co-researchers in this study. Again, I informed them

that participation in this study was voluntary, and they were not being compelled in any way to participate in this research study. Also, I made it clear to them that they were allowed to withdraw from the research process if they felt any discomfort during conducting this research study. Consent was requested from all the co-researchers to allow me to audio record them during the data generation sessions.

#### **4.12.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is the vital element for ethical consideration in a research study. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 117) maintain that “it is crucial for the researcher to recognize the privacy of co-researchers and he/she must accord them with the right to confidentiality and anonymity”. In this research I made an effort to ensure the confidentiality and protection of my co-researchers’ identities by using pseudonyms. Moreover, I withheld all other identifying characteristics of the school and of my co-researchers. All content details, data transcripts, research materials used and voice recordings were kept in a locked safe and all the electronic files were also password protected. Furthermore, the transcriptions of the [hotovoice sessions, free writings, field notes and audios were to be used strictly and merely for research purposes only. As claimed by Shongwe (2019, p. 150) “confidentiality is to ensure that only the researcher has access to the data generated, the research site and co-researchers’ real names are protected”. To ensure confidentiality all the documents were locked in secure cabinets in my supervisors’ office and all will be destroyed after five years in conformity with UKZN’s ethics policy as explained by Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC).

#### **4.12.4 Do no harm**

It is important to avoid the foreseen possible harmful activity during the research process. Harm can be either in the physical form or psychological (Kanyopa & Hlalele, 2021). As a researcher it was my duty to ensure that co-researchers of the study were not exposed to things which could create stress anxiety, pain or invasion of their privacy. Thus, in this study I assured the safety of my co-researchers by following Sileyew’s comment (2019, p. 133) that “PAR research aims at maximizing good outcomes while avoiding unnecessary risks, wrong and harm to the co-researchers”. This study responded to this comment by making sure that no one was hurt during the research process nor were they exposed to any threats or harmful situations. I confirm that our relationship was guided by the principle of respecting each other’s diversity

in terms of ethnic grouping, religion and backgrounds. This smoothed the process by encompassing tolerance and a celebration of our differences. This study managed to follow ethical considerations throughout its process. The findings and results obtained are the facts from the data that were sought and they can be used to obtain insight into improvement of the learner integration issue in a selected Ex-Model C school.

#### **4.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on data generation and methodology for this study. The chapter discussed the qualitative approach, the PAR as the design, and the interpretive-cum-critical paradigm as the enquiry perspective. The description of the research context and profiles of co-researchers, data generation procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations as well as trustworthiness issues were discussed. The chapter further conceptualised the relationships between PAR (as the research design and data generation method), CER (as the theoretical framework for this study) and CDA (as the data analysis method). Through its dense and rich information in this chapter, the study contended that PAR, CER and CDA are discourses for social element through communicative and interactive practices (Msimanga, 2017; Coghlan, 2019; Wheeler et al., 2020). Again, these three concepts are concerned with structural relationships of discrimination, dominance, control and power in a formal organisation such as a school.

PAR, CER and CDA intend to explain the contemporary social, cultural and political issues by involving the examination of force, power and relationships within the research context. Chung (2021) affirms that PAR, CER and CDA aim to investigate social inequalities critically as they are expressed, constituted and legitimised by a dominant group in an organisation such as a school. These three concepts (PAR, CER and CDA) have been employed in this study as basic concepts in this educational research study to answer the research questions regarding the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. These aspects guided the study to explain extensively the relationship between the co-researchers, power, identity, ideologies, politics, and cultural inequalities that existed in this school. I contend that PAR, CER and CDA are emancipatory in nature because they influence the discourse to be a social element through communicative and interactive practices that allow the marginalised to take part in a discourse to reconstruct and reshape their society.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology and the data generation process in Participatory Action Research (PAR). Issues such as trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and profiles of the research context and of co-researchers were discussed. Data generation procedures that clearly spelled out what has been done in both PAR cycles (1 &2), as well as data analysis, were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter intends to present the co-researchers' experiences, perceptions, opinions, and knowledge concerning the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. It will do this by relying mainly on the data generated from multi-stakeholder meetings and then from using the photovoice visual art and reflective writing methods to answer the following research questions:

- What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?

In answering these research questions, the researcher used the co-researchers' verbal quotations and explanations to ensure that their voices stay intact in the study.

#### **5.2 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

This section presents research findings that are from the co-researchers' perceptions, ideas, and contribution of knowledge of the learner integration phenomenon. Discussions that took place during the multi-stakeholder meetings revealed three main themes from the research findings which are; (i) *A multi-perspectival understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context:* (ii) *Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration:* (iii) *The significance of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration.* Furthermore, the photovoice method gave a very good complementary view of these themes

on creating knowledge on the understanding and enhancing learner integration in an Ex-Model C school. The presentation and interpretation of these themes, photographs, and research findings is given in the following themes:

### **5.2.1 Theme one: multi-perspectival understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context.**

This is the first theme that emerged from the findings of the study. This theme corresponds with the first research question which is *What is the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?* An exploration of the understanding of learner integration was guided by the interpretive paradigm perspectives which provided the study with three subthemes that involve the co-researchers' multifaceted understanding regarding the learner integration phenomenon. The three subthemes are *learner integration is the promotion of freedom of expression; learner integration is other cultural insertion;* and lastly, *learner integration is an intellectual, physical, and social well-being involvement.*

These subthemes emerged from the first main theme which is based on the co-researchers' knowledge regarding learner integration in an Ex-Model C school. These three subthemes were developed from multiple and diverse understandings, perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and opinions of the co-researchers on the issue of learner integration. During the second multi-stakeholder meeting co-researchers managed to describe their understanding of the learner integration phenomenon as experienced in their daily lives at Thierry high school. The following questions were used to guide our meeting discussions of co-researchers' construction of learner integration.

1. What is your understanding of learner integration in your school?
2. What is it like to teach/study at this school? Remember you can draw on the many experiences and roles you have played in ensuring that your understanding of learner integration is shaped.
3. Are there any events that you think can influence the understanding of learner integration? You can mention events that take place within or outside the school; for example, in the classroom, the library, sports field, shops, canteens, or even in the cooperation of the school and community.

After being engaged in multi-stakeholder meetings, learner co-researchers were asked to engage in the photovoice sessions which allowed them to present their understanding of the phenomenon through photographs. Hence, during the second photovoice session (photoshooting) learners were required to use their phones to take photographs that would show their understanding of learner integration and how events around their school influence their understanding of this phenomenon. The following questions were used as guiding prompts:

1. Use your cell phone/ camera to take two photographs of events that influence your understanding of learner integration.
2. Explain what is in the photograph and how it plays a part in influencing the understanding in your school.
3. How does it work and who is allowed to have access to what is in the photograph?

Furthermore, the presentation of themes and subthemes in this section will combine with the interpretation of photographs that were taken by learners of the events take place around their school. The presentation and interpretation also ensured a high level of confidentiality, anonymity, and autonomy as demonstrated by Cohen et al. (2013). In addition, in order to ensure the confidentiality, the researcher used shades to cover the faces of the people, school badges and names of a teacher or learner appeared in some photos. all the photographs were interpreted in English by the learners themselves to make it easier for me to understand and to analyse them well. Verbatim quotations were recorded as they are to bring the co-researchers' voices, perceptions, and opinions authentically to the fore.

#### **5.2.1.1 Subtheme 1: Promotion of freedom of expression**

An exploration for the understanding of learner integration leads to this subtheme which emerged to present the co-researchers understanding, thoughts, and knowledge of what learner integration is. The discussions that took place during the first multi-stakeholders' meeting was mainly based on exploring the co-researchers understanding of learner integration in their school. During this meeting, co-researchers discussed what learner integration entails based on their experiences and understanding as well as based on what is done at Therry High School. Their responses reveal that learner integration is the process of promoting the freedom of expression of people specifically learners at their school. As demonstrated by Van Vallenhoven (2015) and Tunu (2019) that freedom of expression is an important requirement for promoting



and protecting democracy in South African schools. Therefore, learner integration is not just a process of bringing together learners from different backgrounds but also it is an act of promoting the right to an expression which results in the school being “a marketplace of ideas” (Van Vallenhoven, 2015, p. 1). The following quotations are from the co-researchers in explaining this subtheme

The principal (Mrs Dalila) explained that:

*Although this phenomenon has a lots of meanings ... to me, I see it as the promotion of freedom of expression ... (uhm) well I said so because, once the learners are full integrated in school they own an autonomy to question anything to their teachers as well as school authorities.*

Male teacher (Mr Ibrahim) also added that:

*Learner integration specifies that the right for freedom of expression is absolutely true in school ... (Clears throat) because learner integration enables learners to express their new ideas, opinions and discoveries which returns to the promotion of the democracy at school too.*

Similarly, Female teacher (Mrs Munira) support and commented that:

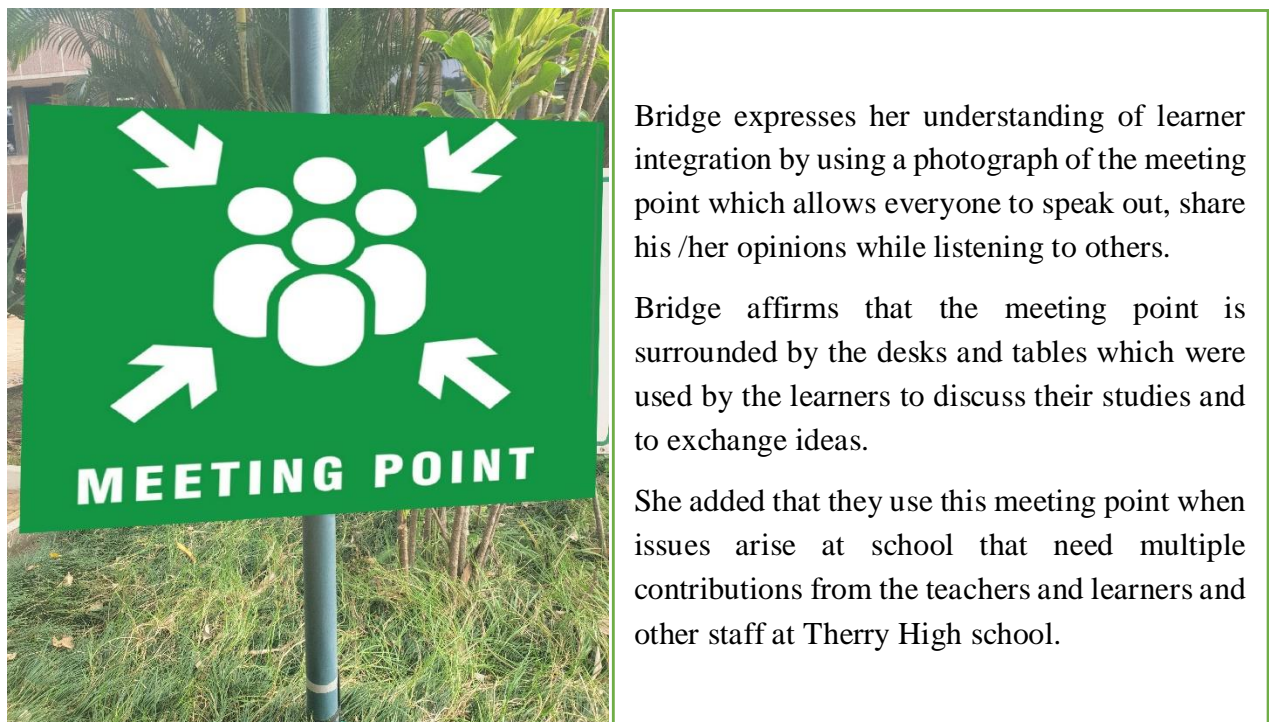
*Freedom of expression through learner integration in our school allows the collection of some new knowledge and ideas from our learners ... (Emh) and this help us to be able to know the balance of our learners' perceptions regarding their studies, school and the whole society.*

In explaining this subtheme learner acknowledge their understanding of learner integration as the promotion of the right of expression by associating this with the actual integration activities that took place in their school. During the photovoice sessions I asked each learner to take two photographs of events around their school that inform their understanding of learner integration. Further, they needed to explain what is in the photographs and why they took these photographs. Thus, the presentation of their comments and their photographs on the understanding of learner integration is presented below:

Bridge (black girl learner) mentioned that:

*(Emh) ... to me our integration is when our teachers allow us to ask questions, listening to us, discuss with us and when then they make an informed decisions regarding different issues in our school.*

Bridge supported her understanding by presenting the photograph that shows the meeting place at their school. She mentioned that teachers and learners normally meet at this place to discuss some issues that arise in the school which have an impact in their learning and lives in general. Thus, her photograph in figure 5.1 shows that learners are integrated which also influences freedom of expression at Therry High school.



**Figure 5.1: Meeting point for expression and sharing of ideas**

Star (white boy learner) indicated that:

*For me learner integration is all about the encouragements and feedbacks we receiving from our teachers and school authority on how to be open-minded, building up our confidences and to be independent learners.*

Eagle (coloured boy learner) pointed out that:

*With learner integration in our school the right of expression is entitled to everyone, which help us learners to develop confidence and a stand for our own opinions while respecting others' opinions too.*

To support this subtheme which concerns the construction of knowledge of learner integration as the promotion of freedom of expression, the learner named *Eagle* illustrated his understanding by using the megaphone photograph. His photograph in figure 5.2 below, indicated that learners at Therry high school are allowed to express their views and opinions through the megaphone at any time as long as they don't express any hate speech or inappropriate information at school.



During the photo interpretation session, Eagle explained the freedom of expression at school by using the megaphone photograph.

He mentioned that learner integration in their school is viewed as freedom of expression because through integration everyone now is entitled this right which he also claimed to be the factor for them (learners) to develop in confidence.

Eagle also added that the megaphone at their school is placed near by the assembly area. Everyone is allowed to share his or her opinion while respecting other opinions too ...

**Figure 5.2: Megaphone for Freedom of expression**

Umbrella (Indian girl learner) also pointed out that:

*Learner integration is two-way communication that school maintains between teachers and learners in daily routines at school ... (emh) in our school our teachers and school authorities are so open ... (smiles) they*

*communicate with us ... and keep us updated with what is going on in school and sometimes they seek our opinions too.*

The findings from the comments made above by the co-researchers indicate the presence of learner integration in this Ex-Model C School. With regard to the construction of the learner integration phenomenon which was explained by the co-researchers as a promotion of freedom of expression, this informs one of the civil freedoms that was guaranteed in section 16 of the South African constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996). According to the RSA (1996) section 16(1) it says that “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression....” This includes the freedom to share and receive information as well as freedom for the academic and scientific expression.

Therefore, the SGB) and the SMT needs to consider these guidelines and to adopt them into the school’s rules. By so doing, this would confirm that learner integration as the freedom of expression will not only promote the freedom of speech which includes the right of learners to speak, hear and read but it also encompasses all other forms of nonverbal expression (Van Vallenhoven, 2015; Tunu, 2019). The protection of this right is very important in South African schools because the previous education system under the apartheid government denied this right to the majority of people. Hence, protection and promotion of this right creates a comfortable learning environment that allows learners to feel free and safe to learn and attain their academic goals as well as enabling them to develop and grow holistically.

#### **5.2.1.2 Subtheme 2: Other cultural insertions and recognition into the Ex-Model C school system**

After attaining its independence in 1994, South Africa became more racially and ethnically integrated in all aspects especially in its education system (Padayachee, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). Our schools became racial and ethnic islands in which learners from diverse cultural background, races, religions and beliefs are learning together in one school. Recently, most powerful agendas like inclusion and integration in South African schools seemed to be raised by many politicians, civil leaders and educational activists to bring awareness of the desirability of racial, cultural and ethnical integration in schools (Zochi, 2015; Mahlo, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). To support this, a strand of literature that has emerged and which emphasises the issue of inclusion and integration in South African schools assert that since the end of apartheid and the institution of democratic government in 1994, South Africa has developed a

number of acts, policies and legislation to ensure that learners are culturally, ethnically, physically and mentally integrated in the schools (Dei, 2016; Gamoran & An, 2016; Grobler, Moloi & Ayres, 2017).

An exploration of the understanding of learner integration, which was viewed from the co-researchers' perceptions, defined the learner integration phenomenon as the insertion and recognition of other cultures values and norms into the Ex-Model C school system. When exploring the intersection of race, culture and sexuality in the schooling process in South African schools, Francis (2019) claims that learner integration in South African schools not only has a considerable impact on a learner's academic achievements but also it improves their lives in a diverse society too. The following quotes were stressed by the co-researchers in expressing their understanding of learner integration as other cultural insertion and recognition into the Ex-Model C school system.

The principal commented that:

*Learner integration is the adoption of other cultural values into a teaching and learning process ... (mmmh) It is all about bringing in all other costumes, beliefs and norms into a teaching and learning environment.*

She added:

*For us school leaders it is our duty to make sure there is a mixture of different races, languages, genders and religion in our school ... (mmmh Yes!) as a way of education improvement ... not only for learners even staff.*

Male teacher stated:

*Just like our principal said ... Learner integration is the form of bringing together all other cultural symbols, ideas (mmmh) features, language and trying to make meaning of teaching and learning process from diverse information and experiences.*

A female teacher explained:

*For me ... I can relate the issue of learner integration with the development of intercultural practices competence in our school for past few years (deep breath) ... yaah! Learner integration is well informed by our intercultural practices that takes place every year in our school.*

The comments above are in line with Bridgeway Education (2019) which states that integration refers to fitting in, namely the incorporation into a society, an institution, or an organization of people from specific or diverse under represented, less privileged, or vulnerable social groups, and always in reference to eliminating discrimination due to race, ethnicity, colour, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or class. Naidoo, Pillay and Conley (2018) with Thamane and Thobejane (2019) maintain that learner integration reduces the prejudices and enhances capabilities of people in diverse settings especially schools. Thus, some psychologists like Hockly (2018); and Lawrence and Nkoane (2020) state that learning in a culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse setting helps a learner to become smarter, to become better in solving complex problems and the learner gets an opportunity to learn new things from other learners of different cultures, races, experiences and backgrounds. The following comments and photo interpretations were made up by the learners to explain how the insertion and recognition of other cultures into their school supports and shapes their learning.

Umbrella pointed out that:

*I believe interaction with learners who are different from ourselves in learning process ... creates the dynamics needs for our cognitive development ... which forces us to work hard to seek new capabilities.*

Moreover, this subtheme was also illustrated by *Umbrella* who also explained her understanding of this subtheme by explaining what is really happening in their school during the Heritage Day ceremonies every year. She mentioned events such as dances, plays, singing of songs, preparation of different traditional foods and drinks, decorating the walls of classrooms with pictures of traditional leaders, drawing of pictures of different religions symbols ... etc. She added that not only those events take place but also, they are allowed to wear their traditional clothes, head gear, and all other accessories at school on the heritage days.

She added:

*The appearance of the walls decor and our tradition clothes of different cultures in school express the originality, worthiness and appreciation of being in the rainbow nation such as South Africa.*

Specifically, she shared the photograph in figure 5.3 below that shows one of the Heritage Day celebrations at Therry high school.



During the photo interpretation session, Umbrella mentioned that the presence of other cultures in their school system made the heritage day a more exciting and happy day every year in their school.

Also, she revealed that learner integration promotes the inclusion of diverse cultures and enhances the feeling and sense of belonging for everyone.

**Figure 5.3: Heritage Day at Therry High school**

Eagle also stressed:

*Insertion and recognition of other cultures into our learning allows us to learn from and with our fellows who bring different perspectives, opinions, ideas and knowledge.*

He also added:

*(mmmmh) through learner integration the cultural recognition brings awareness and appreciation of all cultures in our school.*



Bridge asserted:

*With recognition of values and customs of other cultures ... (mmmh) we get to know each ones' backgrounds and we share our histories which breaks down stereotypes.*

The subtheme that refers to the integration phenomenon is the insertion of other cultures into an Ex-Model C school system. The understanding was illustrated by the girl named *Bridge* by using the photograph of a wall of pictures from their school that expresses the words of embracing diversity. Her photograph in figure 5.4 below signposted that at Therry high school the doors are open for everyone regardless the background, race, ethnic group or religion.



During the photo interpretation session, Bridge outlined that learner integration brings inclusion in their school. She mentioned that the photograph is from one of the many notice boards in Therry high school.

Also she claimed that the welcoming environment in Therry high school influences the insertion and recognition of other cultures and that through it they (learners) managed to learn and understand some values and customs of different tribes and communities.

**Figure 5.4: Learner integration is the insertion of other cultures**

Star also supported:

*(oooh yaah!) Our school eliminated stereotypes. Because learner integration enhances our learning opportunities and capabilities to all of us school.*

The co-researchers' comments showed that Therry high school is currently upgrading some of the multicultural practices in its system. Mavuru and Ramnarain (2020) confirm that issues like biases and personal experiences may not be well understood when they are investigated in a group. This implies that a person may face some difficulty in explaining or talking about these



issues in an uncomfortable place or at an inappropriate moment, especially when the researcher discusses and analyses an issue with people from different positions, perspectives, or even classes (Olivier, 2017; Naidoo et al., 2018). Weber (2015); Bartlett (2016); Zoch (2017); and Higgs (2019) maintain that the prevalence of one cultural program tendency in most of Ex-Model C schools is influenced by “white culture which results in other cultures to not being visible enough and this seems to be a big problem although these schools do not really acknowledge it”. Soupen (2017, p. 240) argues that “the most resounding impact of learner integration in some of Ex-Model C schools is the monoculture practices tendency which also restricts the appropriate public education to all the learners in the school environment”. Shongwe (2019) asserts that the insertion of multicultural practices into the Ex-Model C schools’ system is a critical alternative perspective on the issue of learner integration. Therefore, I contend that the learner integration concept at Therry high school should apply to all the school events and services that highlight social justice, equity, and equality for teachers, learners, and other staff in this school.

#### **5.2.1.3 Subtheme 3: An intellectual, physical and social well-being involvement**

This is the third subtheme on the construction of learner integration which emerged to interpret this phenomenon as a way of organising the school curriculum to promote the intellectual, physical, and social involvement of the learners at the school (Van Vollenhoven, 2015; Macalister & Nation, 2019). The findings of the study under this subtheme revealed that learner integration is acknowledged as an attractive strategy for school programmes rearrangement, particularly in issues like inclusion, multicultural learning, intellectual, social, and physical integration, and effective implementation of desegregation policies in the education system (Ferguson, McKenzie, Dalton & Lyner-Cleophas, 2019). Tunu (2019) points out that the rearrangement of school programs may not only involve the intellectual, physical, and social integration process and its positioning, but, it also promotes the vital aspects of acquisition and of applying knowledge in the real lives of the learners.

Kulasegaram, Mylopoulos, Tonin, Bernstein, Bryden, Law, and Houston (2018) affirm that as a central dimension for learner integration in schools, “curriculum is both context and a roadmap for it” (Kulasegaram et al., 2018 p. 445). Therefore, findings from this subtheme assert that learner integration is labelled as a hallmark of the curriculum that can be achieved through curriculum architecture of its blueprints and structural aspects to achieve both the

intellectual, physical, and social involvement of the learners at school (Macalister & Nation, 2019). The construction of knowledge in this subtheme was expressed by the following comments:

The principal commented:

*(Mmmh) to me learner integration seems to be as an amendment process connected to the application of curriculum synthesises into the teaching and learning context to achieve an effective involvement of the learners ... (mmh yaah) in all aspects intellectually, physically and socially.*

She continued:

*Because from my experiences (eeh) Learner integration makes connections across the curriculum contents, teaching and learning context and the really lives experiences of both us teachers and our learners too.*

A female teacher also supported this:

*(Yaah!) That's true ... learner integration breaks up the traditional boundaries of the curriculum by creating a bridge between the school, academic practices and learners' communities.*

She added:

*With learner integration ... we managed to take part in international Olympic competitions in both aspects, sports and academic.*

A male teacher remarked:

*(chuckling) ... from what I see in this school learner integration increases the level of learner involvements on the issues that related to the intellectual, physical and social. Therefore, (clears throat) ... it might be not effective as everyone wish it to be but I will say that integration takes place in our classroom, our departments even in the sport field.*

Spolsky and Walters, (2017); Seehawer and Breidlid (2018) maintain that learner integration requires a long-term school organisational expression of sporting activities. This group of sociologists supports the idea that the intellectual, physical, and social involvement in the classrooms and the sports fields helps learners to achieve a complete integration in the learning context (Casey, 2016; Dittmar, Spolsky & Walters, 2017; Seehawer & Breidlid, 2018). To achieve learner integration in Ex-Model C schools it is important to consider the rearrangement of school programmes to design them in inclusive ways by considering various aspects such as subject contents, lesson planning, and methods of teaching and learning. The following comments were made by learners on this subtheme. Their perceptions showed that at Therry high school there is an encouragement of intellectual, physical, and social involvement of the learners that have been shaped by the rearrangement of school programs in their school.

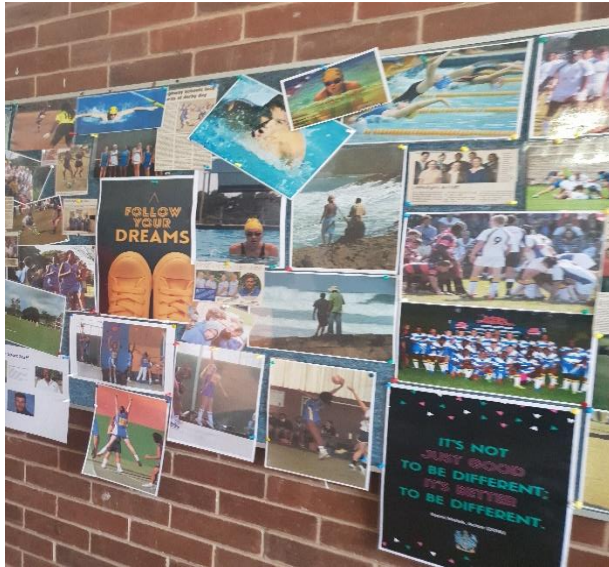
Umbrella noted that:

*(Jay!) through learner integration our school managed to find the space for us to participate in the Olympic academic writing competitions, (mmm) here at school ... both us and staff[s] are involved and engaged in sport activities such as rugby, netball, football, cross country.*

Star also supported that:

*(Mmmmh) ... It is true the exposure to the diverse extra-curricular activities is the fruits of our school programmes rearrangements, now our learning environment not only nourished us academically but also physical and socially.*

To support his understanding of learner integration as an intellectual, physical and social involvement process which he mentioned to be the main reason for their exposure to diverse extra-curricular activities, Star illustrated this by using a photograph in figure 5.5 which shows another notice board at their school which shows different photographs of extra-curricular activities that take place at Therry High school.



During the photo interpretation session, *Star* presented a photograph from his school that shows some of the extra-mural activities that take place in this school. He mentioned that curriculum rearrangement allows them to engage in different extra-curricular activities such as cross-country, soccer, rugby etc.

**Figure 5.5: Diverse extra-curricular activities**

Bridge also commented that:

*The process of intellectual, physical and social involvement is a central dimension for the learner integration in our school. (Giggles) because it allows us to learn, socialising while exploring the nature and the world through our excursions every term.*

Eagle also commented that:

*Intellectual, physical and social involvement ... not only shape up the integration in school but also brings up the connection of curricular and extra-curricular activities. (Clears throat) as well as connections between school, families and our communities too.*

During the photo interpretation session Eagle explained his understanding by saying that learner integration in their school allows them (learners) to participate in various community activities such as cleaning the environment and giving food to the people in need during the Pandemic crisis. His photograph in figure 5.6 below shows learners from Therry High school and other community heroes cleaning the environment in a neighbourhood suburb which was destroyed by the looting actions refers to July unrest in KwaZulu-Natal province that took place between 12th and July 15th, 2021.



During the photo interpretation session, *Eagle* presented the photograph of their involvement in the community activities to express his understanding of learner integration.

He maintained that learner integration influences their full involvement in all things and events that are related to their academic and social lives.

**Figure 5.6: Engagement in community activity**

*Umbrella* also commented on the food giving activity that she was engaged in last year during the Covid-19 crisis. The distribution of food hampers involved the Therry High school students and communities in the society where the school is located. The school and communities together decided to prepare foods and drinks to the homeless, poor and needy people who were negatively affected by the pandemic and the unrest situation in the province. She explained her understanding of learner integration phenomenon through the photograph in figure 5.7 that shows learners from Therry High school and some of community members who were engaged and involved in food distribution to the community.



During the photo interpretation session, *Umbrella* presented the photograph that shows her understanding of learner integration as an intellectual, physical and social involvement of learners.

She mentioned that with learner integration in Therry High school, learners are well involved and engaged in various community activities like food giving to homeless people, visiting orphanage centres etc.

**Figure 5.7: Food giving community activity**

Drawing from the co-researchers' comments and photo interpretations above, learner integration phenomenon seemed to recognise the interconnectivity of several events and aspects that are shaped by the curriculum rearrangement in the school. Therefore, it is important for the curriculum developers to consider diverse experiences across multiple contexts, diverse roles, methods and more favourable ideas that enhance integration of all learners in a school.

#### **5.2.1.4 Summary of the theme one outcomes**

The above section presented an analysis of the learner integration within an Ex-Model C school context as demonstrated by the co-researchers of the study. Through the discussions, it was evident that the co-researchers' understanding of the learner integration phenomenon is shaped by the multiple entities existing in an Ex-Model C school context. This implies that the understanding of this phenomenon is determined by several indicators that seemed to influence the presence and appreciation of the learner integration phenomenon within a school context. Therefore, for an effective learner integration in an Ex-Model C school, this study recognised that the indicators explained by the co-researchers needed to be acknowledged and integrated into the school processes to encourage and empower everyone to gain understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in relation to their lived experiences and beliefs.

### 5.2.2 Theme two: dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration in an Ex - Model C school

This is the second main theme that emerged from the findings of the study. This theme responded to the second research question which is: *How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?* This research question navigated the boundary between the interpretive and the critical paradigms. The first research question attempted to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the co-researchers' lived experiences, perceptions, and descriptions of their real-world which involved the interpretive paradigm perspective. As mentioned in section 4.3 the study intended to blur the edges between the interpretive and critical paradigms and to use the critical paradigm specifically to guide the researcher and co-researchers to address the issue of enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The second theme focuses on the transformation agenda of the learner integration phenomenon which relies on how the co-researchers' understanding shapes the enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The findings on this theme reveal three subthemes which are: *Enhancement is shaped by different (diverse) perceptions and lived experiences; Enhancement is shaped by consideration of others and awareness of the whole of society; Enhancement is shaped by the influences across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects.*

Moreover, during the third multi-stakeholders meeting which corresponds with the third phase of PAR 'observe' the discussions mainly focused on how the co-researchers' perceptions, experiences, and understanding of learner integration shaped the enhancement in their school. During this meeting our discussions were guided by the following questions;

1. At this point I would like you to describe your understanding of learner' integration and explain how you think or feel that the school is enhancing learner integration in this school?
2. What are the events and strategies used by the school to enhance learners' integration?
3. How do these events and strategies enhance learner integration in their learning and development?

In addition, co-researchers were asked to elaborate on some of the diverse aspects like school programmes, policies, plans, structures, sports programmes, facilities, physical structures, psychosocial support and to explain who is involved in employing those strategies to shape the enhancement of learner integration in the school. Finally, the co-researchers were required to explain how these strategies are employed by the people involved to ensure that learners' integration in the school is enhanced.

Eventually, after being engaged in multi-stakeholder meetings, learner co-researchers were asked to engage again in the photovoice sessions which allowed them to present their dynamic strategies for the enhancement of learner integration through photographs. During the fourth photovoice session (photodiscussion) which was conducted through zoom meetings, the researcher uploaded one photo after another and asked the learners to engage in a discussion regarding the photographs. Learners were required to describe how those photographs shaped the enhancement of learner integration in their school. The following guiding prompts were used to guide the discussion:

1. Can you tell me what this photograph depicts?
2. How can this photograph shape the enhancement of learner integration in this school?
3. What and who should be involved in shaping the enhancement of learner integration in your school?

The presentation of findings of the above-mentioned subthemes enhanced the interpretation and discussion of photographs to support my co-researchers' ideas, views, perceptions, and knowledge of the ways which shape the enhancement of learner integration in Therry High school.

#### **5.2.2.1 Subtheme 1: Enhancement is shaped by diverse perceptions and lived experiences**

As mentioned above the findings from the second theme intended to describe how the co-researchers' understanding of learner integration shaped the enhancement in their school. This subtheme presented the dynamic strategies for the enhancement of learner integration that maintained that learner integration is the promotion of freedom of expression, see chapter 5(5.2.1.1). Moreover, findings from this subtheme show that learner integration enhancement



is influenced by considering the multiple and diverse perceptions and people's lived experiences as well as their opinions in the research context. With this insight, the following diverse factors were revealed by the co-researchers of the study on how their understanding shapes the enhancement at Therry High school.

The principal commented:

*(Mmm) with my old-aged memory if am not mistaken the freedom of expression freedom of receiving and impart information. (Eehh) and sharing of opinions are the fundamental rights preserved in our constitution ... (mmmh) also are protected in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 right.*

Then she added:

*(Yaah!) this shapes learner integration enhancement to our school because our learners and their parents are allowed to participate in decision-making on vital aspects of education matters and other related issues in our school.*

She continued:

*(Mmmmh) in our school we have 15 learners who are serving in Representatives Council of Learners (RCL) ... is 3 learners from each grade (Eehh). Also we have 10 parents 2 from each grade who volunteered to serve in our School Governing Body (SGB).*

As discussed in chapter 3(3.4) the South African School Act of 1996 mandated South African schools with the formation of multicultural school governance structures which are constituted by the elected members (SASA, 1996). The governing body should comprise teachers, learners, parents and other staff in the school. In addition, this act further states that “regardless of the school size, parents and learners in the SGB should always hold a majority by having 51 per cent or above of the school governance” (SASA, 1996, p. 27). The principals' comments indicate that at Therry high school the enhancement is shaped by establishing a safe space that adopts a neutral stance to whatever thoughts and opinions the parents and learners contribute towards the educational issues at the school.

Teachers demonstrated their understanding of learner integration towards its enhancement by relating to the teaching and learning context. Their perceptions of the learner integration enhancement reveal that teachers need to convey an attitude of acceptance towards the expression of beliefs or thoughts of the learners in the classroom even if those opinions and perceptions are different from theirs.

Male teacher commented:

*(Mmmmm) freedom of expression is a 'flag' teaching strategy to me in which most of the time turns the teaching and learning process in my classroom to become compromised.*

Then he added:

*(Yaah) as I said it is a flag teaching strategy because it enhances and creates a space for the learners to interact, exchange and sharing of ideas which I think is very important and highly recommended.*

Then he continued:

*(Mmmh) you see! my learners and I normally cooperate, negotiate and sometimes we meet in halfway of what I want and what they want in the classroom (Eehh) which also maintains our mutual relationship between us.*

To support this a female teacher also pointed out that:

*(Mmmh) in my classroom the enhancement through the freedom of expression is shaped by monitoring learners' understanding (Eehh) or let's say learners' prior knowledge on a subject matter.*

She further commented that:

*So, with freedom of expression I shape the enhancement by providing an opportunity and time to my learners to digest information they have in their heads concerning the new topic or any issue raised up in the classroom.*

She continued:

*(Eeh!) by doing so I managed to enhance the understanding of the new topics to my learners ... also it helps them to remember the information and being able to provide relevant information during the assessment time because everything will be stick in their minds.*

Learner' perceptions towards the enhancement indicated that freedom of expression in their school shaped the enhancement of learner integration by assisting them in transforming their lived experiences into the learning context. It was *Star* who maintained that;

*(Mhhhh) learner integration is enhanced because freedom of expression gives us a chance to not only get educated at school but also ... to be educated by people around us too.*

To support his argument, *Star* took two photographs that show several sitting areas that are found in their school. He revealed that these areas are used by learners, teachers, and other staff to sit and talk, exchange ideas, or discuss something. Figure 5.8 below shows the places in which the expression of perceptions and sharing of ideas is enhanced



During the photo discussion session, *Star* revealed that in their school learner integration enhancement is shaped by the several areas which learners, teachers and staff are allowed to sit and share their opinions.

**Figure 5.8: Enhancement shaped by provision of space areas for learners to talk and exchange ideas.**

Similarly, Umbrella also revealed that;

*(Mhh, Yaah) our school creates a space for us to raise our voices (Laughing)  
students' voice matters (All laughing).*

Then she continued;

*You see! enhancement is shaped because we can speak up for ourselves  
without any fear of not being heard or acknowledged.*

To support her argument, Umbrella took a photograph of an ideas and opinions box that is found in their school. She revealed that these boxes are placed in different areas around the school whereby learners, teachers and other staff members are allowed to write their opinions without mention their names and drop these into the box. Figure 5.9 below shows one of the idea boxes that are used to collect diverse opinions and perceptions by the RCL.



During the photo discussion session, *Umbrella* confirmed that learner integration enhancement is shaped through the ideas and opinion boxes at Therry high school.

She also explained that learners are allowed to drop any comments, opinions and perceptions into these boxes without being acknowledged.

**Figure 5.9: An opinion box that enhances learner integration through expression**

Bridge also asserted that:

*(Mmmmh) for me enhancement is shaped when our teachers create a classroom activity that requires our voices (Eehh) or let's say our contributions.*

Then she continued;

*(mmm) activities like debates, group presentations (Eehh) or even role plays and creative art activities.*

To support her point, Bridge took a photograph that shows her fellow learners in the classroom raising their hands as a sign that they want to share some views in their classroom. Figure 5.10 below is showing enhancement of learner integration as demonstrated by Bridge.



During the photo discussion session, *Bridge* maintained freedom of expression shapes learner integration enhancement because it requires a classroom or teaching and learning environment which is characterised by activities that promote the learner's confidence and ability to voice their perceptions, opinions and ideas.

**Figure 5.10: Learner integration is enhanced by allowing learners to voice their minds**

Furthermore, Eagle maintained that:

*(Eehh) enhancement is shaped by the distribution of mutual accountability between us learners and our school governance (clears throat).*

Then he continued:

*learner integration is enhanced through the Representatives Council of Learners (RCL) by the way I am a head prefect of the school (Chuckling) ... this council acts as partners with our SGB in decision-making of different issues in our school.*

To support his comment, Eagle presented the photography of himself and other learner representatives at school. Figure 5.11 below shows the RCL members at Therry high school. To explain his photography Eagle mentioned that having a RCL in their school is viewed as a powerful act of empowering learners as part of the young leader generation to be able to express theirs and other learners' opinions at school.



During the photo discussion session, *Eagle* explained that their RCL comprises diverse learners which results in attitudinal changes and eradication of prejudicial views in their school.

He also revealed that this council normally offers an ear to the learners to hear their problems and challenges at school, then, they take some of suggestions and opinions to the SGB

**Figure 5.11: Enhancement is shaped through the Representative Council of Learners**

Additionally, Bridge provided another photography that shows some of the parents and their children during the opening day. Which she also claimed to be a dynamic strategy for the enhancement of learner integration in their school. She asserted that;

*Open days also are one of the learner integration enhancement strategies in our school (Giggles) during the open days both prospective parents and their children are allowed to come to school during the school hours.*

She added:

*On the open day ... parents and new learners are getting a chance to visit the school and make a tour to the school facilities like classrooms, libraries,*



*laboratories and to the sport fields (Eehh) and mostly, is us learners who show the prospective parents and their children around and tell them about our school.*

In support of that, Bridge provided a photograph in figure 5.12 below that shows some of the parents and their children during the opening day.



During the photo discussion session, *Bridge* revealed that learner integration enhancement is shaped by the open days because both prospective parents and their children get an opportunity to ask questions, sharing their opinions and they get a chance to hear from the principal of the school or the head of admissions concerning the school's vision and values.

**Figure 5.12: Enhancement is shaped through open days and school facilities tour**

Dewey (2019) wrote extensively about the necessity of engaging learners through learner integration in a progressive education system and he summarised his views by saying that freedom of expression is needed at school because it enhances the integration and enables the learner to make their own special contribution towards the development of the school. Therefore, it is important for schools in South Africa to be relevant and inclusive for learners, teachers and other staff in their daily lives. This implies that SGBs and SMTs should maintain open dialogue often on contemporary issues on education matters, because by doing so, this will have a beneficial impact on both learners and teachers at school because they will have a space for their voices to confront the power dynamics within the schools (Van Vollenhoven; Dewey; 2019; Ferguson, et al., 2019). The following section focuses on the second subtheme that emerged under the second main theme.

#### 5.2.2.2 Subtheme 2: Enhancement is shaped by considering others and awareness of the whole society

Findings from this subtheme revealed that all the co-researchers believe that the insertion of other cultures into Ex-Model C schools will significantly influence the enhancement of learner integration. This also was demonstrated in the second subtheme on the co-researchers' construction of learner integration, see 5.2.1.2. Moreover, findings from this subtheme indicate that learner integration enhancement is shaped by consideration of not only the multicultural learning environment but also by fostering inclusivity and awareness of the whole society. This implies that the insertion and recognition of other cultures at Therry high school helps teachers to respond well to learner diversity in the school and by taking a culturally responsive approach to teaching their learners will feel accepted, appreciated and will feel comfortable with one another. Drawing from this, the following dynamic strategies were revealed by the co-researchers of the study on how the insertion of other cultures shapes the enhancement of learner integration at Therry high school.

The principal of the school affirmed that:

*(Eehh) Consideration of others and the whole society shapes the enhancement of learner integration in a way that it guides our school not only to create a greater multicultural learning environment. (Eeehh) but also our school governance, teachers and learners are becoming more aware of inclusive education (Mmm) as the school system encourages acceptance to each other and helping one another to thrive in the diverse world.*

Furthermore, Mrs Munira (the female teacher) indicated that the flexibility of the school system encourages the promotion of learner well-being at school and out of school.

She mentioned that;

*(Ja, Yes!) in our first meeting ... I think I told you that I am a member in a Learning Support Team (LST) right? [she asked while looked at me]*

Then she continued:



*(Mmmm) So, one of our responsibility of LST is to make sure our learners are well in all aspects such as socially, emotionally and physically (Eeehh) in short their emotional and psychological well-being is on our hands.*

She added:

*(Mhhh) cultural insertion influence awareness of others and the society diverse into our school system this shapes the enhancement of learner integration as it provides us teachers with great opportunity to learn more from our learners and also to be able to teach them on how to adopt to an evolving world outside the school, (Mmmm) and be able to embrace those different from themselves.*

Mr Ibrahim (the male teacher) explained that the enhancement of learner integration in the teaching and learning context prompted by an insertion of other cultures into the school system improves learners' teamwork skills (collaborative skills), communication skills and encourages them to develop active learning participation.

The male teacher pointed out that:

*(Mmm) consideration of others and society diverse awareness into our school system shapes the enhancement of learner integration in such a way that both our classrooms and our school curriculum are becoming responsive to the increasing cultural diversity not only in school but also our society in general.*

He continued:

*For me, (Eeehh) I use this as strategy for the enhancement of learner integration by encouraging cultural awareness to all my learners in my classroom.*

He continued further:

*(Mmmm) I also managed to enhance each learner's sense of identity and together we are fostering inclusion in the classroom and the whole school as community.*

Consideration of others and being aware of the diverse society serves as a foundation for the learners' understanding of how to enhance their integration and promotion of diversity in their classrooms. Findings from learners' perceptions of other cultural insertion towards the enhancement of learner integration indicates that the school system has been transformed from the strict and authoritative approach of their teachers when it comes to managing their classrooms into a more flexible approach. Learners' comments also revealed that the teachers at Therry high school gave them freedom to read and prepare their own learning materials that are related to the lessons so that they can approach the subject topic from their own point of view.

Umbrella stated that:

*(Mmmm) consideration of others and society awareness into school system shapes the enhancement of learner integration in the way that it allows us to learn about one another's backgrounds (Eehh) also we get to know one another's' hobbies, (Eeeh) ... learning styles and also to know what exactly makes us unique in our own ways.*

To support her point, Umbrella took a photography of one white teacher at Therry high school who likes to wear an African printed shirt on every occasion at school. Figure 5.13 below shows a photography of this teacher at Therry high school.



During the photo discussion session, *Umbrella* revealed that at Therry high school both teachers and learners celebrate one another's differences.

She also claimed that this was the dynamic way of respecting and becoming more sensitive to one another's beliefs, culture and language concerns.

**Figure 5.13: Shows a white teacher with African printed shirt.**

Bridge also commented:

*(Oohyhhh!) This demonstrates a genuine interest in learning and knowing one another's culture at our school.*

She added;

*(Eeeh) this does not only allow us to create bonds ... but also makes us feel valued too.*

To support her comment Bridge took a photograph of their artwork that shows the tree of possibilities that was displayed on one of the walls of media centre at Therry high school. Figure 5.14 below shows the tree of responsibilities.



During the photo discussion session; Bridge mentioned that the tree looks so beautiful because of the different colours of the paint on it.

These coloured painted hands represent learners at Therry high school, and it shows how beautiful and valuable they are regardless of their differences.

**Figure 5.14: The tree of possibilities at the media centre in Therry high school**

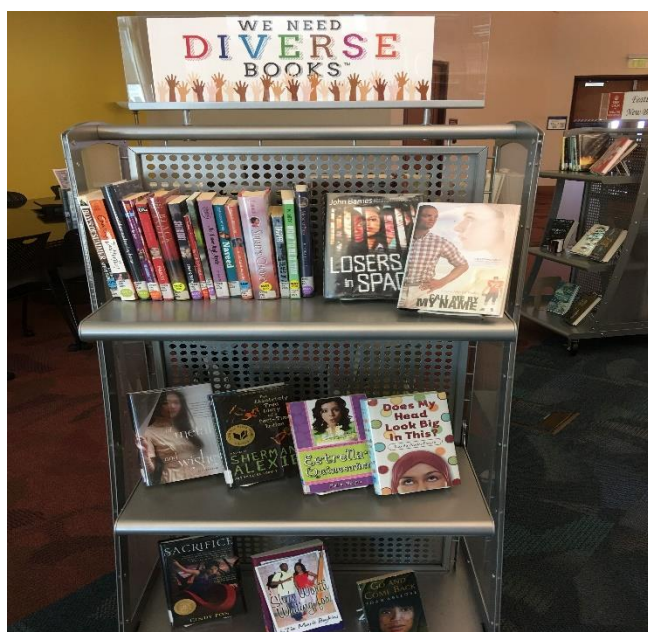
Moreover, Star also commented that:

*The enhancement is shaped in the way that everyone in our school is able to celebrate and respect our differences.*

He also argued:

*Awareness of the whole society diverse and consideration of others shapes the enhancement of learner integration in such a way that it promotes cultural sensitivity to everyone's culture (Mmh) religion, language and beliefs.*

To support his view, Star took a photograph of one bookshelf in their library which shows a diversity of books that speak about religion, histories of different tribes as well as sexual orientation. Figure 5.15 below shows the books that speak about diversity in their library.



During the photo discussion session, *Star* described that these books that remind them of the importance of remaining themselves while enhancing awareness of others and of the diversity of the whole of society.

**Figure 5.15: The bookshelf of diverse books.**

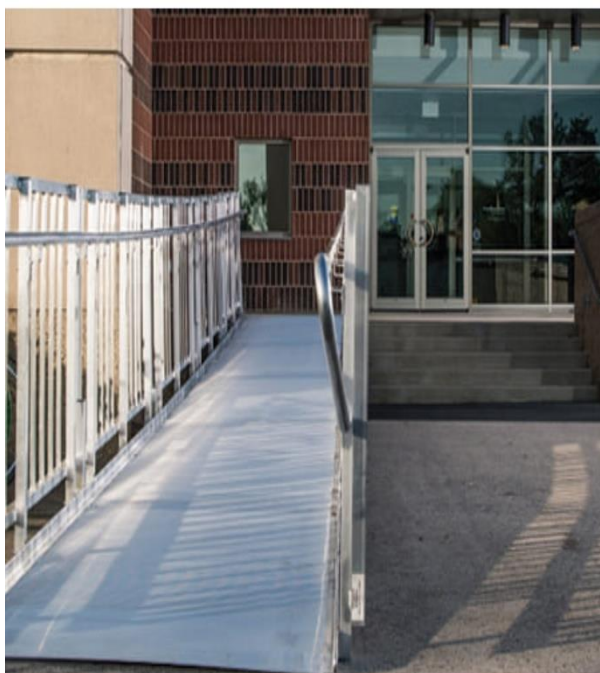
In addition, Eagle pointed out that:

*(Mmmh) as the principal mentioned earlier that to be aware of our diverseness and consideration of others does not only expose us into multicultural learning but also brings awareness on inclusivity and acceptance of one another.*

He continued:

*(Eeehh) this shapes the enhancement of learner integration in a way that our school governance makes sure that there is consistently improvement in accessibility of necessary resources such as libraries, laboratories, classrooms, etc.*

To support his argument, Eagle took a photograph of a ramp passage in front of their science laboratory that offers easy access for the learners with different abilities. Figure 5.16 shows the enhancement of learner integration by considering learners with different abilities in Therry high school.



During the photo discussion session, *Eagle* revealed that enhancement of learner integration in their school goes together with recognition of learners with special needs because every learner deserves easy and safe access throughout the school.

**Figure 5.16: The ramp in the entrance of science laboratory at Therry high school**

Findings from this subtheme indicate that recognition of others and society's diversity not only shapes the enhancement of learner integration in the school but also promotes teamwork, good communication skills as well as helping learners to develop the sense of belonging. Findings showed that with recognition and awareness of others in school encourages learners to engage in active learning which improves their social skills. Further, it promotes learner's emotional, psychological and physical well-being which results in their achievement of their academic success. The following section discusses the third subtheme that emerged under the second main theme of the study.

### **5.2.2.3 Subtheme 3: Enhancement is shaped by the inspirations across the academic, socio-cultural, and physical well-being aspects**

The findings of this subtheme suggest that enhancement of learning in schools can also be influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the learner. This implies that the successful enhancement of learner integration is nurtured by the curriculum and the school programmes rearrangement which mainly focuses on meeting learners' academic, socio-cultural, emotional and physical well-being at school. This subtheme presents the dynamic nature for the enhancement of learner integration as shaped by influences across the involvement of the intellectual, physical and socio-cultural aspects. This was demonstrated by

the third subtheme on the co-researchers' construction of learner integration (see section, 5.2.1.3). Findings in this subtheme indicate that learner integration enhancement is mainly shaped through the active involvement of the learner in academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects at the school. The following diverse mechanisms shaped the enhancement of learner integration at Therry high school.

The principal of the school explained that:

*(Mmmmh) with inspiration across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being involvement the enhancement is shaped in a such way that (Eeeh) these aspects tend to promote active participation of learner in the curricular, extra- curricular (Eeehh) cultural and community activities.*

She continued;

*(Eehh) as I mentioned earlier ... that learner integration in our school is aims to offer our learners quality and equality education (Yaah) as school we are trying our best to provide learning environment that motivates our learners to active engaged in academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being activities regardless of their gender, age, race, ethnic group of their different abilities.*

She also added that

*(Mmh) in this school every grade has the yearly academic project that requires learners to engage with communities, family members of even natural resources that are found in their living environment (clears throat) so you can see how these aspects shape the enhancement of their integration.*

In spite of this, enhancement of learner integration was also explained by teachers at Therry high school, who affirmed that it is important to consider diversity and cultural awareness as crucial aspects in the South African classrooms. This also was mentioned in Tchamyu (2020) that teaching diversity in the classroom not only exposes learners to various cultural and social groups but also it helps them to become better citizens in their communities.

Knowing this, a male teacher commented;

*(Mmmmmm) for me ... I normally incorporate diversity in my lesson plans which helps me a lot to present my lessons while connecting it with real world issues.*

He goes further;

*(Yaaah) so, the enhancement is shaped in a way that (aaah) I make sure that the lesson contents are appropriate and encourage them to give some examples from their lived experiences.*

A female teacher explained that:

*(Eeehh) an inspiration across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects shape the enhancement of learner integration in the way that our role in the classrooms changed from main actors into facilitators.*

She added:

*(Mmmmm) for me ... I like to expose my learners into diverse perspectives (Eeeh) I am doing this by giving them group assignments from time to time which forces them to work collaboratively to explore and solve a problem together.*

She continued:

*(Mmh) so, their integration in enhanced as they become good to work in diverse with others ... which also help them to see the important of the diversity and appreciating one another.*

Dewey (2019) explains that socio-cultural, physical and emotional well-being aspects are determined by the learners' learning conditions and interaction with others which in turn shapes their cognition, attitudes, beliefs and perception of the realities in their lives. This suggests that learner integration is shaped by co-construction of knowledge and is mediated by the academic, socio-cultural and physical functioning of the learner. There are aspects that play an important role in development and learning when they "encourage the learner to become aware of the broader social aspect, cultural and diverse historical contexts of human activities" (Kulasegaram et al., 2018, p. 446). Learners' comments revealed that inspiration across the



academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects shape the enhancement of their integration through the mutual engagement in both the academic projects and in the community activities which offer them a solid social presence in their diverse communities.

*Star* affirmed that:

*(Mmh) inspirations within the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects shape the enhancement of our integration in a way that it exposes us into cooperative learning (Eehh) together with the diverse perspectives and lived experiences which are different from our own.*

He added:

*(chuckling) which is good thing ... because our learning environment not only enhancing the integration but also promotes our creativity, critical thinking (Eeh) it increases motivation and our problem-solving skills.*

To support his comments, *Star* took a photograph of his science project which he did when he was grade 10. This was a Biological project which was based on describing Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) as the chemical for identifying the molecules that carry genetic instructions in all living things. Shibiti (2020) maintains that the project-based learning approach promotes active involvement and collaboration of learners and encourages them to work together to address complex problems in their real world. Figure 5.17 below shows one of the actual projects that was done by learners at Therry high school.



During the photo discussion, *Star* revealed that enhancement of learner integration is shaped by a collaborative environment the encourages them to think critically and to apply their prior-knowledge.

He also mentioned that projects given at their school normally require the intellectual, socio-cultural, physical involvement which he claimed was the central aspect of their motivation and contextualisation of their

**Figure 5.17: Enhancement is shaped by doing actual projects at Therry high school.**

Ryan and Deci (2020) confirm that overall well-being enhances intrinsic motivation in the learners and decreases disciplinary problems at school. This implies that an inspiration across academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects not only shapes the enhancement of learner integration in a school, but it also promotes academic achievement, improves school satisfaction and it benefits the learner, the communities as well as the nation (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Shibiti, 2020).

To justify this, Bridge commented that:

*(Yaah) what I believe is that ... someone who feels better can learn better too*  
*(Giggles)*

Then she continued;

*(Mh) well-being is a core aspect in our education ... so the inspirations across the academic, socio-cultural and physical aspects involvement shape our integration through some of school-community based activities which we are engaging in.*

She added:

*(Mmh) these aspects guided our school programmes to develop some protective dynamics that promotes our mental health and well-being (Eeeh) which help us a to increase in confidence to develop sense of belonging and to develop holistically.*

To support her comments, Bridge took a photograph of the notice board outside the LST office that shows the readiness of the school to help and support learners with their well-being.



During the photo discussion session, Bridge revealed that their LST office always ensures that learners are met with all emergency materials needed at school. She mentioned some biological needs such as sanitary pads, nutrition etc.

She mentioned that in the LST they have a school counsellor who helps learners with emotional and psycho-social challenges at school.

**Figure 5.18: The notice board for the well-being support at Therry high school.**

Co-researchers' comments also revealed that inspiration across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects of involvement shape the enhancement of learner integration through the school's community-based approach. The findings from this subtheme indicate that Therry high school utilises the school-community based approach to ensure that both learners' and teachers' well-being is promoted through active involvement is diverse community activities. To clarify this Eagle asserted that;

*(Mmmmh) In our school we have various activities that are influenced by school-community based ownership of the education (clears throat).*

He added:

*(Yah!) this shapes the enhancement of learner integration in the way that some of learner' parents and community leaders are serving in our SGB ... the inspirations within these aspects shape the enhancement through the mutual supportive ways the community offers to us and our school and their responsive ways to our learning demands which encourage us to achieve our learning goals.*

To support his comments, *Eagle* took a photograph of their talking drum session which was held in their school by the African Drumming Circle Community. Figure 5.19 below shows the school-community members participating in a talking drums session at Therry high school.



During the photo discussion session, *Eagle* revealed that they have learned about different types of drums. The talking drums play a vital role in every aspect of African life including the emotional, spiritual and physical aspects.

He also, noted that the talking drums in their school takes place during the time of graduations, and other celebrations at Therry high school.

**Figure 5.19: The enhancement of learner integration through a talking drums session**

Inspirations across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being shape the enhancement of learner integration by fostering some activities that help learners to strengthen their self-regulation, being able to focus as well as to reduce negative feelings and anxiety (Ferguson et al., 2019). To clarify this, *Umbrella* commented that;

*(Mmmhh) inspirations across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects shape the enhancement through our engagement in several activities that improves our memories, moods, (Eeh) even our social skills.*

To support her comment, *Umbrella* took a photograph of the poster that appeared on one of the notice boards at school that encourages learners to participate in a meditation workshop. Figure 5.20 below shows the poster that enhance learner integration through psycho-social activities that take place in Therry high school.



During the photo discussion session, *Umbrella* mentioned that meditation workshops and classes help them a lot in handling their academic stress.

She also mentioned that meditation sessions provide them with a state of relaxation and tranquil minds which promotes their intellectual, social, physical and emotional well-being.

**Figure 5.20: The enhancement of learner integration through psycho-socio activities.**

Some research in 2019 like that done by Caena and Redecker; Francis and Hersh and Elley revealed that there are many dynamic strategies to be curious about in the enhancement of learner integration in schools. However, most of the strategies mentioned in many research studies tend to correspond with the improvement of teaching and learning process whereby teachers are advised to create inclusivity in classroom and to adapt to the holistic approach that takes into consideration the individual differences, and the socio-cultural and psycho-social issues of the learner (Dewey, 2019; Hersh & Elley, 2019; Shibiti, 2020). Drawing from the co-researchers' comments on the theme that slopes the dynamic strategies towards the enhancement of learner integration above, the findings of the study revealed the number of socio-cultural, physical and psycho-social activities in Therry high school that significantly shape the enhancement of learner integration in school.

#### **5.2.2.4 Summary of the theme two outcomes**

The above sections focused on the co-researchers' perspectives and knowledge on the process of enhancing the learner integration phenomenon within their school context. Findings of the study on this theme presented the co-researchers' insights into the diverse strategies which the SGB and the SMT could use to enhance learner integration within the school context. The interpretation of subthemes presented for the second theme above advanced the dynamic strategies and the role of different educational stakeholders in the enhancing of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school context. This study viewed the strategies discussed above as vital ways of informing and orienting the enhancement of the learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school.

#### **5.2.3 Theme three: the significance for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration**

The findings from this theme responded to research question 3 which is: Data generated during the fourth multi-stakeholders' meeting was used to answer this research question. Besides, the findings of this theme produced three subthemes which are: to address integration challenges currently experienced by learners in a selected Ex-Model C school; to promote a sense of belonging and well-being in the learners in a selected Ex-Model C school; to improve and reduce racial achievement gaps for the learners in a selected Ex- Model C school. Discussion of the third research question of the study was guided by the following questions:

1. At this point I would like to know what your reflections are regarding the understanding and enhancing of learner integration?
2. Why is it important to understand and enhance learner integration in this Ex- Model C school?
3. What are the advantages of understanding and enhancing of learner integration in this school?

The presentation of findings of the third theme and subthemes was inspired by the interpretation and discussion during the data generation process. The section also includes direct quotes from my co-researchers' ideas, views, perceptions and knowledge on elucidating the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in their school.

### 5.2.3.1 Subtheme 1: To address integration challenges currently experienced by learners in a selected Ex-Model C school

The third research question sought to explain why we need to understand and enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. During the multi-stakeholder meeting my co-researchers managed to discuss the significance and the need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration by identifying some challenges experienced by the learners in their learning environment, which need to be addressed through an effective implementation of learner integration. The following are the issues discussed by co-researchers of the study that seem to affect learners and their learning process at Therry high school.

- **Psychosocial challenges**

Findings of this subtheme revealed that learners normally experienced some challenges when they are trying to adjust to the new school culture, new learning environment or even to new peer company. These challenges were categorised as psycho-social challenges and were described as a lack of the sense of belonging, feelings of alienation and poor self-confidence (Nwokedi, 2019; Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020). Moreover, psychosocial challenges were viewed as a major problem for most of the learners at Therry high school, as most of them tend to have low self-esteem to and anxiety within the learning environment. The co-researchers' comments illustrate psycho-social challenges as follows:

The principal commented that:

*(Mmmm) there is this feeling of being sitting on an edge (giggles) when they facing new people, new things, new tasks, etc.*

She added:

*(Ehh Jah!) I admit that our learners ... they do have this kind of feeling of not being sure of what they are doing others seeing our environment as not welcoming as it ought to be (mmm) which I also agree that it affects their learning and academic achievements in one way another.*

A male teacher identified stress as another psychosocial challenge currently being experienced by the learners at Therry high school. He commented:

*(Eeehh) with adolescent age of most of our learners here in school is the among the major factor for most of their stress related issues.*

He added;

*(Clears throat) some stresses are caused by their emotional problems that are caused by their family members and issues at homes separation of parents and divorces ... or sometimes the learner him/ herself facing their own personal conflicts of with peers.*

He continued;

*(Mmh) which I believe with the understand and enhancement of learner integration these issues will be addressed as our SBG will be able to develop supportive programs and more other integrative practices which will make our learners to feel at ease.*

Psychosocial challenges such as being fearful and anxious were also identified by the co-researchers as another bad experience that causes distraction in the learners during the learning process at Therry high school. This was explained by the female teacher who alluded to the fact that:

*(Eehh) I think by having code of conducts, school rules and expectations displayed everywhere in our schools' notice boards as well as in the classrooms makes them to feel uncomfortable and develop this feeling of being fearful and anxious every time.*

Moreover, learners expressed the feeling of being alienated within the school environment which also they claimed to affect their learning and development negatively.

Star commented:

*(Mmh) it is when we propose something to our SBG, and they denied it ... this makes me to feel alienated and not only me, seriously this makes most of us learners to feel like we are not wanted here or not welcomed in our own school.*



Bridge also supported this:

*(Ooh Ja!) sometimes our SGB and SMT does things that makes us feel unwelcomed sometimes they do things and draw a line of demarcation that makes us feel that we don't belong here.*

Lack of social interaction was identified as being among the psychosocial challenges that affect the learning process in the learners at Therry high school. The following comments were offered by learners and teachers as follows;

A female teacher noted:

*(Mmh) I noticed that most of the learners are experiencing challenges on getting close with other learners and teachers of other race ethnic group or from other culture. (She added) it's normal to see them in groups of same races or ethnic group here in our school.*

Umbrella also pointed out that;

*(Mmh!) honestly speaking our social life between us learners ... it is very poor.*

She continued;

*I said so ... because I have not really found the close interaction between myself and other learners of different race or ethnic group. It is like what Mrs. Munira said it is normal for a black learner to get close or being friended with her or his fellow blacks, Indian with Indians or white with whites.*

In the same vein, Eagle also supported this;

*(Mmh) that's true our social interaction as learners in this school is very weak and not good at all.*

The findings of the study revealed these psychosocial challenges as major issues currently being experienced by learners, which also seems to affect their learning and development

negatively. This needs to be addressed through effective learner integration in order to enable learners at Therry high school to grow, advance in their learning and to successfully achieve their academic goals.

- **Socio-economic challenges**

The findings of the study identified other challenges that are currently being experienced by the learners at Therry high school are socioeconomic challenges. These socioeconomic challenges were related to the financial demands identified by the learners and teachers as major barriers to their teaching and learning process. Findings of the study revealed that the socioeconomic challenges are fostered by the fact that Therry high school is a fee-paying public school which also is known as a semi-private school. Therefore, this school needs additional money to fund some projects and events as well as other educational initiatives. The co-researchers' comments indicate that the SGB needs to take into consideration the struggle and minimal income of both teachers and parents of the learners. The following quotes illustrate this issue as follows.

The male teacher asserted that:

*(Mmh) despite our good intentions of fundraising. It is unethical to have it in each school term ... as we are pressuring parents with their minimal funds for their basic necessities.*

A female teacher also supported this;

*It is true our school is public school and we do fundraising for school supplies and supplemental like buying more books, to construct better infrastructures, to have advanced technology as well as to be able to pay our staffs. (Mmmm) ... but I suggest the solution of these issues should not be fundraising only I think it is important for the school to have some other sources of incomes like livestock keeping, agriculture activities, etc.*

Furthermore, the issue of socio-economic challenges was shared by learners as follows:

*Bridge* narrated that;

*(Mmmm) I remember when I joined this school for grade 8 in 2018 then, few months my dad was fired from the company where he was working ... so with financial instabilities we faced that time my dad decided to ask our principal to put me under exceptional which was declined only because I was new at school.*

Nonetheless, other co-researchers explained the socioeconomic challenges that they are experiencing currently because of lack of scholarships and funding to most of learners at Therry high school.

Umbrella confirmed that:

*(Eish) lack of scholarship is a major hindrance factor to our learning and development here at school ... because most of our learning materials we normally make copies, some projects and other educational events like executions need some cash to be involved.*

Star also supported this;

*On top of copies and those projects materials which we are buying ourselves to complete our project tasks, our school fees normally increase for 10% every year ... so without scholarship it is a big challenge honestly.*

Eagle also highlighted that;

*(Yaah!) this issue really cause hindrance to our learning and the SGB have giving the rule that each learner must finish all the fees payment by the 30<sup>th</sup> of October each year ... otherwise your bill account is marked under red line as insufficient payments or trouble payer!*

To clarify, the principal also pointed out that:

*(Eeeh) so, with issue of high fees, lack of scholarships and all of that as a SMT member I want to say we are making a lot of sacrifices to give some sort of fee remission to the orphan learners who do not have parents to support their education at all.*

She continued;

*(Mmh) but also I'm agree that our school fees are quite high, and this is because ... we are using the money to pay some of our staff as well as our school supplies and maintenance.*

Drawing from above comments, findings of the study revealed that learners at Therry high school are currently experienced several psychosocial, financial and socioeconomic challenges within their learning environment. These challenges were explained as hindrance factors that negatively affect the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this shows the relevance of this study which explores the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

#### **5.2.3.2 Subtheme 2: To promote a sense of belonging and well-being in the learners in a selected Ex-Model C school**

Findings from this subtheme revealed the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The co-researchers' comments on this subtheme indicate that learner integration has a huge impact not just on a learners' academic achievements but also on their overall well-being as adolescents and later on as adults. Consequently, co-researchers' perceptions suggest that with the understanding and enhancing of learner integration their school will be able to deal effectively with the rising rates of psychosocial challenges such as teenager suicide, social isolation, loneliness, being alienated and poor self-confidence among learners. This implies that an effective learner integration at school will encourage safety, well-being and a sense of belonging in all learners regardless their historical background or family issues. Therefore, the quotes from the co-researchers illustrate the issue of well-being and sense of belonging as follows:

Male teacher noted that;

*(Mmm) I believe the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in our school will significantly promote the feeling of being valued, prioritised and connected to our learners within and outside the school environment.*

A female teacher also supported this:

*(Yah!) I support that there is a need for the understanding and enhancement of learner integration as it will significantly help our SMT and SGB to build a mutual relationship with our learners. Also, this notion is emphasizing more on safety, mutual respect and supportive relationships between all stakeholders on the teaching and learning process.*

The principal also commented:

*(Oh!) there is a significant need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in our school ... because this phenomenon is contagious to the learners' well-being and their sense of belonging.*

She continued;

*(Mmh) with greater understanding and enhancing of learner integration our school will significantly be able to reformulate and restructure the school-sanctioned events and programs that intentionally promotes sense of belonging and well-being of our learners.*

Furthermore, learners' comments indicated that learner integration is significant in supporting their lives not just in their academic but also with their emotional problems. *Star* pointed out that:

*For me, the understanding and enhancing of learner integration are crucial as they encourage and help us to grow and develop mentally and socially ... also, we are becoming highly motivated with our school work while we developing a high sense of school belonging and valuing our learning environment.*

He added:

*It will significantly increase our academic motivation as we will become full involved into our learning environment also, will help us to see the importance and value of what we are learning.*

In the same vein, *Umbrella* also noted that:

*I support the fact that the understanding and enhancing of learner integration significantly influence learners' attitudes and beliefs about their school.*

She continued:

*(Eeh) the enhancement of learner integration will significantly improve the opportunities for the successful academic achievements for all learners. (Mmm) also, will shape the learners to value and respect our school culture and sanctioned rules.*

She added:

*By so doing is more likely to develop a sense of belonging and well-being to the learners as they will get rid-off all the bad assumptions and experiences of their school.*

Bridge also commented:

*(Eeh) I have read one book that says 'sense of belonging is positively associated with academic success and personal motivation ... so, it's true that the understanding and enhancing of learner integration brought a huge sense of comfortableness to us learners ... which in return tend to significantly boost our learning motivation, academic success and well-being too.*

In addition, Eagle confirmed that;

*Promotion of our sense of belonging and well-being is very important for us adolescents especially those who are coming from ethnic minority or lower socio-economic backgrounds.*

He continued;

*(Ja!) with the great understanding and enhancing of learner integration in our school will resulted to the higher level of valuing our school works and*

*develop in our self-belief which leads to the higher chances to succeed in our learning process.*

Verschelden (2017); Rowe, Jackson and Fleming (2021) found that promotion of a sense of belonging, and well-being is linked to positive psychological learning outcomes including positive emotions, social acceptance and development in self-worth in the learners. Therefore, the co-researchers' contributions above expressed the need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school because they believe this phenomenon promotes satisfaction, well-being and a sense of belonging in the learners.

### **5.2.3.3 Subtheme 3: To improve and reduce racial achievement gaps for the learners in a selected Ex -Model C school**

Racial achievement gaps in the South African education system were characteristic of the peak years of the apartheid government system (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015; Olivier, 2017; Motala, 2019). After the advent of democracy in 1994 the country's education system was followed by many desegregation policies and reforms that mainly focused on democratisation and promotion of equity and equality in South African schools (Clark, 2013; Stuurman, 2013; Moloi, 2019). Recently, research on diversity in schools revealed that although many reforms and policies were formed to address the issue of inequality and bringing changes in South African education system the level of achievement gaps to the learners of different races are still evident (Grobler, Moloi & Ayres, 2017; Chanee, 2020).

According to Chanee (2020) and Quinn (2020), South African schools' reproduction of class inequalities and achievement gaps led to a growing demand for schools that were previously defined as whites' schools to look for interventions that would significantly reduce and avert all the learners' impediments to their successful academic achievements. Therefore, the understanding and enhancing of learner integration were viewed by the co-researchers as a vital way of reducing and improving achievement gaps at Therry high school. The principal mentioned;

*(Mmm) until now we are still confronting the challenges of previous education system talking of racial achievement gaps problem for which we*

*have no answers yet ... and we are wrestling with conflicting perspectives and interpretations of this issue every single day.*

She further added:

*(Eeh!) with an effective understanding and enhancing of learner integration our school will significantly prepare activities, learning programs and events that will provide opportunities for high intellectual capacity-building to all our learners regardless their race, background or ethnic group.*

A male teacher also pointed out that:

*(Mhhh) that is true because the process of learning is fundamentally socially constructed as well as social shared, this means that with the great understanding and enhancing of learner integration our learners will be able to interact and the context of interaction influences diverse learning opportunities which also enhances the abilities to learn to the learners.*

The learner integration phenomenon was viewed by the co-researchers as an intervention for reducing the prejudices and for the promotion of intellectual competence development. Their comments revealed that there is a need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration as it will significantly address the issue of stereotyping. According to the co-researchers' quotes stereotyping that is based on racial or ethnic considerations results in miscalculations that undermines ones' problem-solving skills and thus, paves the way for the racial achievement gaps.

Eagle commented that:

*The understanding and enhancing of learner integration will significantly help us to get to know one another's history which will break down all the stereotypes and increasing our learning opportunities as well as our cognitive capabilities.*

Bridge supported this:



*(Ooh Yah!) learner integration results to the reduction of prejudices and incline to the promotion of racially and ethnically diverse learning environment which most of psychologists like Bandura believes ... such kind of learning environment makes or helps a learner to be smarter (Giggles).*

Learner integration not only reduces the racial bias by countermanding the stereotypes but also this concept promotes the successful academic achievements of the learners. This implies that once a learner is educated in a racially diverse setting he/she become more comfortable with others which leads to a dramatic decrease in discriminatory attitudes and prejudices. Findings from the co-researchers' quotations revealed that integration influences active engagement of a learner in critical thinking, problem-solving skills and in how to cope with new experiences.

A female teacher mentioned that:

*(Mmh) learner integration enhances cooperative learning environment learners beneficially learns alongside with those whose perspectives and backgrounds are different from their own.*

She continued:

*With such kind of learning environment promotion of creativity, deep learning, learning motivations, self-motivation, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are constantly... and beneficially improves the achieving gaps to all learners.*

Star also supported this:

*(Eeh, Yah!) I agree that when we effectively interact with other people from ourselves in learning activities we are creating the dynamic needs for our cognitive capacity which leads us to unleash our new capabilities.*

Bridge also alluded to the fact that:

*(Mmh) for me the greater significance and the need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration is that it will significantly enhance our learning as we will learn from and with other learners who brings different*

*perspectives into our lives ... as a result our minds become powerful and increase ability to understand, critique and to reasoning.*

Umbrella spoke eloquently on the importance and the need of having an understanding and enhancing of learner integration in their school as it will promote more equitable access to the school resources which also she claimed to be a major cause for racial achievement gaps.

Umbrella asserted:

*There's a significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration ... as it will help to reduce disparities in accessing of well-maintained school facilities will also create easy approaching ways of our qualified teachers and other professional (mmm) also ... will help us to deal with our challenging projects and subjects too.*

The phenomenon of racial achievement gaps in schools remains largely under-researched and little understood too. Much of the research done on the multicultural learning issue has devoted considerable attention to the importance of integration in schools which also supports the relevance of this study in particular. The co-researcher's quotations above revealed the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

Despite national desegregation policies and education system reforms that have been instituted since 1994, there still are solid reasons to promote racial or ethnic integration in South African schools which I believe will not only benefit the learners alone but also the whole of South African society. Historically, the issue of learner integration has focused on the depravity of segregation and on the importance of the provision of equal opportunities to diverse learners (Clark, 2013; Chanee, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). This implies that there is significant justification and good evidence that learner integration provides greater opportunities to learn and also motivates the learners to achieve their academic goals at higher levels.

#### **5.2.3.4 Summary of the theme three outcomes**

The submissions in the above sections showed the need and significance of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school context. The co-researchers of the study indicated that the learner

integration phenomenon is crucial not only for learners' academic performance but also for their general well-being. Furthermore, the findings of this theme revealed that co-researchers believe that effective learner integration in a school can promote a sense of belonging in the learners whilst, helping them to achieve their academic goals. This study maintains that the learner integration phenomenon is vital within the school context because it tends to improve the emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of the learners in their learning environment. Also, the study believes that effective learner integration helps learners to feel safe, welcomed, and protected which in turn tends to enhance learners' ability to solve different challenges they face within the school context.

### **5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented and reported on the findings from the co-researcher's points of view of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Three main themes emerged from the findings of the study, namely Multi-perspectival understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context; Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration; and the significance of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration. The results of the study also showed how the co-researchers through their active participation, collective views, experiences, and engagement in multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice sessions, and reflective writing activity provided dense information regarding the issue researched.

Meanwhile, the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) and National Planning Commission for Republic of South Africa of 2012 (NPCRSA) identified the strategies to eliminate the critical challenges of inequality, and lack of both inclusion and integration in schools. The NDP 2030 stipulates that integration in education is inevitable as the notion influences and addresses the need for improving educational equality, quality, and the equalising of opportunities among learners. This indicates that it is important for schools in South Africa to consider that we are presently living in a global society whereby the whole world has become a global small village.

Drawing from the three themes that emerged from the findings of the study, with theme 1 which is *the Multi-perspectival understanding of learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context*, as presented under section 5.2.1 of this chapter, this study agrees with Leadbeatter (2021) that knowledge on learner integration is power and ignorance of it is

oppression. Thus, schools will oppress their learners if they do not have knowledge of and, they do not understand and appreciate others around them. Furthermore, with theme 2 which is *Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration* as presented under section 5.2.2 of this chapter, this study contends that in any multicultural learning environment learning of cultures only is not enough. Thus, learners need to experience, practice, and appreciate those cultures. Theme number 3 is *the significance of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration* as presented under section 5.2.3 of this chapter; this study believes that learner integration intends to celebrate diversity, and to create and promote the human spirit in the learners' lives. It also aims to prepare the learners for work, life, and leadership in a more collaborative, creative world, and to allow them to navigate deftly in dynamic and multicultural environments.

The next chapter presents the discussion and synthesis of findings based on the research questions and three emerging themes from the findings of the study. Further, the chapter will summarise how the findings are contextualised within the existing body of knowledge as well as within the PAR design perspectives and Critical Emancipatory Research (CER) theory that frames the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter Five findings were presented and interpreted. Direct quotes and transcriptions were utilised to support data that were presented to be aligned with the main purpose of the study which was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This chapter discussed and synthesised the findings of the study to respond to the research questions and three themes that emerged from the findings. The chapter discussed, outlined, and contextualised the findings by integrating the perspectives and assumptions of Critical Emancipatory Research theory (CER) that were employed to frame this study. The chapter also infuses the findings with characteristics and assumptions of the PAR research design employed in the study. The findings of the study were aligned with relevant literature to provide a link with the broad body of knowledge that exists concerning the learner integration phenomenon. In addition, the discussion and synthesis of the findings are accompanied by direct quotes from the co-researchers and explanations to ensure that the voices of my co-researchers remain essential to this discussion and synthesis of the findings of the study.

#### **6.2 DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS**

This section presents the discussion and synthesis of findings from the three main themes that emerged from the findings of the study namely; *Multi-perspectival understanding of learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context*; *Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration*; and the *significance of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration*. The following sections go further with the discussion and synthesis of the above-mentioned themes by synthesising the findings of the study by the CER, PAR design and the related literature.

##### **6.2.1 The understanding of learner integration is multi-perspectival**

Drawing from the deliberations on the multi-stakeholder meetings that were conducted to answer the first research question which is *What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?* Co-researchers'

responses revealed three definitions of the learner integration phenomenon within their school which were presented and interpreted in theme one in Chapter Five (5.2.1) of the study. The multi-perspectival understanding of the phenomenon revealed that the findings of this first theme and its three subthemes are crucial to the context of schools in South Africa and to the international debates regarding the integration of learners in a multicultural learning environment. The study employed multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice, and reflective writing as data generation methods. These methods gave the co-researchers the opportunities to explore, reflect and share their knowledge and perceptions regarding the learner integration phenomenon. Although the perceptions, views, and thoughts of the co-researchers of the study do not represent the perceptions of other people in all Ex-Model C schools in South Africa, their views, ideas, experiences, knowledge, and understanding are intentionally considered, conceptualised, and well explained within the context of this study; see Chapter Five (5.2.1).

According to the literature, the learner integration phenomenon is seen as very complex, and it does not have a universal definition. Naidoo, Pillay, and Conley (2018) assert that the learner integration phenomenon can be seen and understood differently and defined differently by people with different historical backgrounds. Chisholm (2015), Radebe (2015) and Van Wyk (2015) describe learner integration as how learners of different backgrounds, different ethnic origins as well as learners of different races build bridges to bind themselves together. Stuurman (2013); Engelbrecht, Nel, Nel, and Tlale (2015); together with Taylor and Spaull (2015) define learner integration as the tendency of South African schools to open their doors to all learners regardless of their racial diversity, culture or ethnic origin.

The movement towards a desegregation of previous racially determined education systems in South Africa has been documented in a number of scholarly works since the early 1990s. Most of these scholarly studies like that done by Kapalu and Mahlo (2019) reveal that the previous education system classified learners into racial groups, and they were recognised as African, Coloured, Indians and whites. Not only was the South African society discriminatory ethnically based and racially biased but this also applied to learners, teachers and other staff at schools (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013; Machard, 2015; Padayachee, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). For the case of the South African school system the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon was described as the means to “build up a bridge to bind learners together respectively” (Mahlo, 2017, p. 78).

Some other African countries that have not experienced race segregation and all other form of discrimination in the history of their education systems like Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya, Botswana, Zambia, and Uganda, for them learner integration means simply bringing together everyone in school so as to form a whole (Mangope, Kuyini, Musaruwa, Major, Bramwell & Tiny, 2018); Ipinge, 2019). The learner integration phenomenon in these countries is seen as a key foundation for each learner's development and growth as the concept plays a potential role in the delivery of quality education for all in the school (Froiland & Worrell, 2016; Chirwa, 2018; Mangope et al., 2018).

Drawing from the international context, learner integration refers to the process of restoration of educational policies, school cultures, and practices in schools so that they respond to learner diversity (Smadi & Raman, 2020). The academic research literature covering European education systems reveals that one of the greatest concerns for educational policy in Europe is learner integration because of the fact that it is a nascent source of tackling new educational needs in schools (Sandri, 2014; Medda-Windischer, 2015; Dusi & Steinbach, 2016; Munteanu, 2019). The education system history of countries like Ireland, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK), and Israel, is marked by prejudice and bigotry. Learner integration in these countries refers to the process of bringing together learners and staff from Catholic, Protestant, and other religious backgrounds in schools (Alidadi, 2017; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). Henrard (2016); Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore (2018) note that in the early 1900s societies in these countries were divided religiously, politically, culturally, and economically, and lack of familiarity with those who are different resulted in sectarian strife and violence in the society.

As indicated in Chapter Two the CER was employed in this study as the theoretical framework to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. CER is not like other traditional theories of educational research that are concerned with investigating, explaining, and understanding what is happening within the research site (Gilani-Wiliams, 2014; Omodan, 2019). Casanave and Li (2015); Vinz (2016); together with Roggerone (2018) contend that CER tends to go further than the discussion and investigation agenda of traditional theories by critiquing and seeking to make meaningful changes to the situation. Similarly, Behar-Horenstein and Feng (2015, p. 18) in their study noted that "CER is a theoretical framework that came to challenge the conservative methods of constructing knowledge in educational research". This study employed CER as a theoretical framework to

promote the principle of diverse recognition which is a very important feature in attaining social justice for the co-researchers (Braun et al., 2013; Nkoane, 2013; Manual, 2016; Alston & Bowles, 2019).

Findings of the first theme “*multi-perspectival understanding of learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context*” revealed diverse co-researchers’ understanding of the learner integration phenomenon based on three insights namely; *freedom of expression*, *the introduction of new cultural elements into the schools’ system* and *promotion of curricular, co-curricular and Extracurricular programs*. Therefore, these insights are discussed and synthesised as follows.

#### **6.2.1.1 Freedom of expression**

Freedom of speech as reported in countries like Finland and Denmark has resulted in significant learner integration in their schools and other educational institutions. Studies by Henrard (2016) and Li (2019) confirm that freedom of expression for learners is enforced by an effective learner integration policy as well as education legislation that highlights such freedom in the learning environment that should be accessible to all learners (Kansanen, 2014; Henrard, 2016; Li, 2019). Schools and other educational institutions in Denmark view learner integration as a policy of promoting the development, self-efficacy, and self-improvement of a learner as an individual (Nickson, 2016; Munteanu, 2019). Melabiotis (2018); Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) claim that school administrations, teachers, and parents believe that integration involves freedom of expression that facilitates equal opportunities in access to the curriculum and frees the learner from various discriminatory aspects.

On the other hand, the co-researchers’ responses and comments on their understanding under the first subtheme which is *learner integration as the promotion of freedom of expression* are in line with the CER of promoting social justice as explained in Chapter Two (2.4.1). Drawing from the co-researchers’ responses to this subtheme as presented in Chapter Five (5.2.1), their perceptions and experiences demonstrated that in their school learner integration is not just a process of bringing together learners from different backgrounds, but also it is the process of promoting freedom of expression which results in their school being “a market place of ideas” (Van Vollenhoven, 2015, p. 1). It was noted when one of the co-researchers mentioned that:



*Learner integration specifies that the right for freedom of expression is absolutely true in school ... because learner integration enables learners to express their new ideas, opinions, and discoveries which returns to the promotion of democracy at school too. (Male teacher)*

Freedom of expression or freedom of speech is viewed as an important requirement for promoting and protecting democracy in South African schools (Tunu, 2019). Significantly, the findings of this subtheme demonstrated a close relationship to the CER principle of promoting social justice because the notion of social justice under the CER theoretical framework has become pertinent in education research, especially the research done in educational systems that have a history of discrimination and oppression (Pearson, 2016). This implies that it is important for the education researcher to consider the background of each co-researcher in the school or in any other educational context in order to practice just and unbiased social justice (Manual, 2016; Parker, 2019). In addition, Sudan and Zuin (2018) confirm that social justice in the CER theoretical framework focuses on democracy and freedom in the implementation of the learners' full humanity in educational contexts. This was revealed by one of the co-researchers who confirmed that;

*Our integration incline with the promotion of freedom of expression in our school because our teachers and school authorities are so open (smiles) they communicate with us ... and keep us updated with what is going on in school and sometimes they seek our opinions too. (Umbrella)*

With this in mind, the findings of this subtheme are supported by the PAR characteristic of advocating equality in research; see Chapter Four (4.6.1). This implies that the PAR research design nurtures the tendency of the researcher and co-researchers to work cooperatively as partners in a manner that leads to action for change (Bradbury, 2015; Chidarikire, 2017; Walker, 2018). Fine and Torre (2019) state that PAR design advocates equality by valuing and appreciating all people involved in the research context. Ngwenya (2018, p. 22) notes that "PAR calls for a mutual and consensual construction of knowledge in which the main goal is to give everyone authority and appreciation" for being in the research context. I contend that the co-researchers' understanding of learner integration involving freedom of expression corresponds with the CER principle of promoting social justice and the PAR characteristic of advocating equality as both aspects focus on bringing equality to people and development. The

findings of this subtheme clearly suggest that learner integration is the promotion of freedom of expression which is also a sustainable motive towards the promotion and realisation of social justice and promotion of equality in schools. This is because the CER principle of promoting social justice and PAR's characteristic of advocating equality intend to empower the learners to deal with some challenges regarding their integration in their schools.

#### **6.2.1.2 Introduction of new cultural elements into the school's system**

Related literature revealed that the insertion and introduction of other cultures into the American schools were viewed as a crucial aspect to deal with the challenges related to immigration learners, multiculturalism, and diversity in American schools. (Freidus, 2019). Wolf, Guzman, and Lopez (2016); and Freidus (2019) remind us that school segregation in the United States of America (USA) has a long history that involved inequality and discrimination of learners in schools. Smadi and Raman (2020) note that since the 1980s learner integration has become a priority in most of the USA's schools because it was seen as the only way to end the separation of the two races (blacks and whites).

In the early 2010s it was reported that young American scholars, education activists, and teachers formed a non-profit organisation that called for greater integration in New York City's (NYC) schools and in the USA (de Moura, Legey & Howells, 2018; Hockly, 2018). In practice, this organisation focused on changing schools in NYC to become racial and ethnic islands in which learners from diverse cultural backgrounds, races, religions, and beliefs could learn together in one school (Smadi & Raman, 2020). This implies that the introduction of other cultural elements into the education system leads to flexible, fair, and inclusive education systems which respond to educational challenges and make schools more comprehensive in learners' diversity. Introduction of multi-cultural events and programmes into the school practices and in education policies were significantly promoted by initiatives taken for the implementation of learner integration in schools and other educational institutions in European countries. The *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR) in its article 2 states that "no learner's identity and culture shall be denied the right to participate and to engage in educational exercises in any function which has the relation to education and teaching" (ECHR, 2005, art. 2). The article goes further and states that countries' education systems shall respect the rights and origins of parents too, by ensuring that such education and teaching are in conformity with their own religion, culture, values, and philosophical convictions" (ECHR,

2005, art. 2). The *European Social Charter* (ESC) of 2013 also encompasses prevention of discrimination based on the ground of culture, race, sex, language, religion, social origin or age in all of the European Union (EU) countries' education systems (Anjum et al., 2018; Darmody & Smyth, 2018; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). The charter contains descriptions of the implementation of learner integration in schools and other educational sites. In its article 17 the charter stipulates that "EU countries' education systems should take all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure learners are culturally integrated into their education and encourage their regular attendance at school" (ESC, 2013, art. 17).

The insights of the findings from this subtheme "learner integration is other cultural insertion and recognition" seems to correspond with the CER principle of emancipation which was explained in detail in Chapter Two (2.4.2). The CER principle of emancipation intentionally emphasises liberating marginalised people by viewing them as important and allowing their voices and experiences to be heard (Wellmer, 2014; Jacobs, 2016; Hooley, Sultana & Thomsen, 2018). Meanwhile, Roggerone (2018) and CohenMiller and Pate (2019) claim that the CER's principle of emancipation allows people of different backgrounds and with different status to work together under the shade of freedom and empowerment. Therefore, learner integration at Therry High school influences an emancipation tendency as follows:

*With a mixture of different races, languages, genders, cultures, and religions in our school not only defines integration but also it is a way of education improvement and empowerment ... not only for learners but even for our teachers and other staff. (Principal)*

Dube (2016); Mokotjo (2017); Hutton and Heath (2020) concurred that the principle of emancipation comes within the school context where there were or still are various forms of domination. Based on this, Dube (2016) and Wood (2019) argue that the dominant group in schools normally holds the power to make their interests mainstream which is unquestionable and must be followed by the majority. Emancipation was explained as one of the PAR characteristics in Chapter Four (4.6.4). Research by Wood (2019, p. 195) confirms that the "emancipatory tendency of PAR tends to create knowledge which is concerned with freedom of people from constraints in their social structure". In relation to other culture insertion and recognition scholars like Walker, Martinez-Vargas, and Mkwanzani (2020, p. 87) claim that the "emancipatory character of PAR describes the procedures through which the people's

culture and identities are becoming considerable and free from suppressive process or systems” Cordeiro, Soares, and Rittenmeyer (2017) suggest that the emancipatory tendency of the PAR design emphasises the formation of social norms, values, and culture that encourages the improvement of human liberties in schools. Indeed, the emancipatory character of PAR focuses on the analysis of unjust, oppressive structures and practices that diminish people’s ability to achieve humanity in their learning and working contexts (Chidarikire, 2017; Walker, 2018; Mbambo, 2019).

In the educational sites, the CER principle, as well as PAR characteristic of emancipation, encourages the introduction of other cultural elements into the school’s system by enabling multi-cultural practices and approaches which aim at freeing learners from any form of cultural or ethical oppressive practices (Braun et al., 2013; Alvarez-Blanco & Torres, 2018; Starr, 2019). Demirović (2013); Maboya (2014); Vinz (2016); and Hooley et al., (2018) also posit that the main aim of the emancipation principle is not only to liberate and organise schools in collaborative ways but also to create an impartial unprejudiced living style for our learners. This view was supported by one of the co-researchers who commented that:

*Learner integration is the insertion of values and customs of other cultures in our school ... this helps us to get to know each one’s backgrounds and we share our histories which breaks down stereotypes.* (Bridge)

Mokotjo (2017) confirms that in an educational context the emancipation agenda and learner integration focus mainly on the analysis of inclusive practices, structures, and philosophies that will consider and embrace every learner’s uniqueness. As a matter of fact, the emancipation principle supports the insertion and recognition of other cultural practices into Ex-Model C schools since the principle inclines to empower and liberate the marginalised and oppressed group of people (Fook, 2017; Masimanga, 2017; Walter, 2017; Wood, 2019). This implies that the consideration of each individual’s culture in school helps to assist and help every learner to develop a sense of belonging and humanity and a capacity to achieve their academic goals. One co-researchers commented that:

*Other cultural insertion in the school system forms awareness of others and concern of the whole South African society.* (Female teacher)

Drawing from the considerable body of research, the emancipation agenda of the CER theory and PAR research design resonates with the idea of embracing other cultural incorporation into the school system as both agendas highlight that every learner should be actively engaged and involved in decision-making on the issues that are related to them (Huber 2020; Macrine, 2020; Walker et al., 2020). The findings from this subtheme suggest that the insertion and recognition of other cultural practices into the school system resembles the emancipation tendency of both CER theory and PAR design because the issue not only preserves the learners from being prejudiced in their learning environment but also it provides them with the freedom and power to share their ideas, perspectives, and experiences on various issues related to themselves and to their learning process.

#### **6.2.1.3 Promotion of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular programmes**

The third subtheme is *“Learner integration is an intellectual, physical and social well-being involvement”* the findings from this subtheme revealed the connection across the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities in the school context. Different education research proposed that learner integration is equal to the inclusion of learners from different religions, socio-economic backgrounds, races, different abilities as well as different genders to be hosted in one school environment with equal treatment and equal opportunities for them to pursue their studies (Granger, 2014; Bagheri, 2015; Harr, et al., 2015; Nwokedi, 2015; Hockly, 2018; Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020). Additionally, Harr et al. (2015); Higgs (2016); Blignaut (2020) assert that this phenomenon puts the emphasis on components such as curriculum content and extra-curricular activities, as well as teaching and learning processes that intentionally involve the learners so as to fulfil their needs and as a result learners are steered to better learning and academic improvement. Co-researchers explain their perceptions regarding this subtheme from the psychological perspectives on the understanding of learner integration. They linked this phenomenon with other subject matter that was likely to bring awareness of the health problems that may affect the learners and their development when they are not exposed to the intellectual, physical, and social well-being involvement not only in the classroom but also school wide (Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020). This was also revealed by the co-researchers who commented that:

*Learner integration breaks up the traditional boundaries of the curriculum ... by creating a bridge between the school, academic practices and learners' communities. (Female teacher)*

*It is a good thing ... because our learning environment not only enhances the integration but also promotes our creativity and critical thinking. (Eeh)*  
*it rises our motivation and our problem-solving skills. (Star)*

It is agreed that in order to provide a framework for examining and enhancing the learner integration issue in educational sites, schools should consider the vital components, namely the teacher, context, curriculum content, the learner him or herself and their communities (Melabiotis, 2018; Naidoo, 2018 & Zeeb et al., 2019). Moreover, the findings of this subtheme on the construction of learner integration emerged to interpret this phenomenon as a way of organising the school curriculum to promote the intellectual, physical and social involvement of the learners at school (Van Vollenhoven, 2015; Macalister & Nation, 2019). The findings of this subtheme maintained that learner integration is acknowledged as an attractive strategy for the school programmes rearrangement, particularly for issues like inclusion, multicultural learning, intellectual, social, and physical integration, and effective implementation of desegregation policies in the education system (Ferguson, McKenzie, Dalton & Lyner-Cleophas, 2019). This notion corresponds with the CERs' principle of improving human lives, as explained in Chapter Two (2.4.4).

Some of research advocates that CER's principle of improving human lives not only seeks to improve lives but also to inspect and understand the physical, intellectual and social practices that take place within the educational context as well as to investigate how they have an impact on learners' daily lives (Maboya, 2014; Noel, 2016 & Parker, 2019). Further, the co-researchers' response to this subtheme confirmed that:

*Through learner integration our school managed to find the space for us to participate in the Olympic academic writing competitions. And here at school, both students and staff are involved and engaged in sports activities such as rugby, netball, football, cross country. (Umbrella)*

Hence, the above comment concurred with research by Darder (2015); Jacobs (2016); Fook (2017); and Mokotjo (2017) who allude to the fact that the goal of improving human lives is to bring empowerment and social transformation to the people in the society. The findings of this subtheme correspond to the PARs' perspective of combining action and research as explained in detail in the objective of the PAR in Chapter Four (4.5.2). The aim of combining these two concepts into one research design automatically turns people involved into becoming the action takers (Cook et al., 2019). Therefore, the findings demonstrated from the co-researchers' responses stipulate the critical dialogue which helped me to understand the research context well and different aspects of the physical, intellectual, and socio-cultural practices taking place as well as their influence on the learner integration. The findings of this subtheme assert that rearrangement of school programmes that presents intellectual, physical, and social integration process. It was mentioned that these aspects are vital of the successful enhancement learner integration (Tunu, 2019).

### **6.2.2 Enhancement of learner integration is dynamic in nature**

The central aim of the study was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The study explored the researched phenomenon from the grounded context and ideas that connected the nature of the research context and interrelated aspects of learners' lives within the context. As mentioned in Chapter Four (4.3) that the study intends to blur the edges between the interpretive and critical paradigms and it uses the critical paradigm specifically to guide the researcher and co-researchers to address the issue of enhancement of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The second theme mainly focuses on the enhancing process of learner integration phenomenon. The study took the research position that navigated the boundaries from the interpretive to the critical paradigm by providing perspectives on the question that says ***How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?*** The findings of the second main theme of the study which is "Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school" revealed three dynamic aspects for the learner integration enhancement in a school which are sharing of different (diverse) perceptions and lived experiences; consideration of others and awareness of the whole society; inspirations across the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

The findings from the second theme provide dynamic strategies for the enhancement of learner integration in schools. The arrangement for learner integration is now supported by the large body of related literature on how to enhance learner integration in schools. Much of this literature recommends some strategies and advocates them together with specific classroom practices, policies, programmes, and processes of the given school (Radebe, 2015; Bradley, 2020). Kolbe and Rudolph, (2018); Themane and Thobejane, (2019) maintain that learner integration enhancement is crucial in learning environment. The literature suggests that for the successful achievement of learner integration education sites are required to create the “essential strategies based on the background conditions of the institutions to support the enhancement process” (Themane & Thobejane, 2019, p. 22). The findings of the second theme make connections across the body of literature that discussed different strategies for the enhancement of learner integration in schools. The following sections are going to discuss and synthesise the arrangements of learner integration in a school by conflating the assumptions and perspectives of the CER theoretical framework and the PAR research design that were employed in the study as follows.

#### **6.2.2.1 Sharing of diverse perceptions and lived experiences**

Drawing from the existing body of knowledge the implementation of dynamic strategies for the enhancement of learner integration in schools was described as an ongoing process that is influenced by arrangement and communication (Kunene & Mthethwa, 2020), these scholars explained that arrangement and communication as learner integration enhancement strategies are viewed as vital and inevitable aspects because they create a platform for sharing ideas and exchanging of experiences regarding the successful implementation of learner integration enhancement. It is argued that effective learner integration enhancement requires a proper flow of information which should be from the authority to the teachers and learners within the school (Kapofu & Kapofu, 2020). This implies that in order for the school to have a successful enhancement of learner integration all the information regarding learner integration should be communicated to all stakeholders like teachers, parents, learners and other staff.

Essentially, the idea of communication was demonstrated by the first subtheme on the co-researchers’ understanding of the learner integration phenomenon which maintained that learner integration is the promotion of freedom of expression; see Chapter Five (5.2.1.1). Moreover, findings from this subtheme depict that such an understanding of learner integration,



and enhancement can be only influenced by considering the multiple and diverse perceptions, people's lived experiences as well as their opinions regarding the researched phenomenon within the research context. The co-researchers' comment noted:

*The freedom of expression is also a freedom of receiving and impart information, (Eeh) and sharing of opinions is the fundamental right preserved in our constitution. (Principal).*

Another co-researcher revealed that:

*Learner integration enhancement is shaped by the sharing of diverse perceptions and our lived experiences which is neutered by effective communication in our school. (Female teacher)*

In addition, An and Mindrila (2020) allude to the fact that communication regarding learner integration should be effective and a two-way process that involves the intention to obtain stakeholders' feedback, inputs, and advice. This was supported by the co-researcher who commented that;

*(Mmh) freedom of expression is a 'flag' teaching strategy to me which most of the time turns the teaching and learning process in my classroom to become compromised. (Male teacher)*

The communication strategy seems to correspond with the transparency and openness agenda of The PAR design which highlights that knowledge formed using action research is seen as significant because it liberates people from themselves and different types of domination (Masimanga, 2017; Alston & Bowles, 2019). Hence, in this study, the concept of transparent communication was promoted by actively engaging and involving all the co-researchers throughout the research process. As one of the learners commented;

*(Mmh) for me, enhancement is shaped when our teachers create classroom activities that require our voices, (Eehh) or let's say our contributions in activities like debates, group presentations or even role plays and creative art activities are promoted by the two ways communication which also influence the enhancement of our integration. (Bridge)*

The above views are also supported by the CERs' epistemological assumptions that CER theory enables researchers to construct valuable and helpful knowledge that is influenced by critical discussions and free communication and by considering different perspectives, opinions, and suggestions from co-researchers (Manual, 2016; Huber, 2020; Macrine, 2020). Findings from the first arrangement "*sharing of diverse perceptions and lived experiences*" corresponded with the body of literature as well as perspectives and assumptions of the CER theory and the PAR design employed in the study by advocating that the successful learner integration enhancement requires the school to create communication channels that will allow information, opinions, perspectives, perceptions and diverse life experiences to reach the stakeholders in time and in a proper manner.

#### **6.2.2.2 Consideration of others and awareness of the whole society**

A growing body of literature supports the idea of learner integration enhancement by consideration of others and awareness of the whole of society and it relates this notion to collaboration in schools (Chidarikire, 2017; Dodds, 2019; Starr, 2019). Some scholars also affirm that the easiest way and possible strategy towards the attainment of effective learner integration enhancement is collaboration in schools (Dodds, 2019), he further maintained that in order to enhance learner integration, the schools need ensure the aspects of collaboration and consideration of others. Other researchers viewed collaboration as a creative partnership strategy between the role players (An & Mindrila, 2020). In fact, collaboration allows the school stakeholders to work together to identify and define barriers and needs that seem to be lacking in the process of learner integration enhancement in the school.

Meanwhile, this study employed a mostly useful data generation method in participatory research to bring together all the people who are involved in the research and to provide them with a sense of collaboration and commitment. However, consideration of others and awareness of the whole of society in the school practices was revealed by the co-researchers of the study and this idea was linked to the issue of collaboration in their school as both notions are inescapable if integrity and the cooperation tendency is to be promoted. The findings of the study revealed that cultural insertion and awareness of societal diversity involves collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders at school which in return tends to enhance learners' self-confidence and it also plays a big role in their acquisition of academic knowledge. This was evidenced by the comment of co-researchers who mentioned that:

*(Mmh) consideration of others and awareness of the whole society in our school shapes the enhancement of learner integration in the way that it promotes collaboration and it allows us to learn about one another's backgrounds. (Eehh) also, we get to know one another's hobbies, learning styles and also to know what exactly makes us unique in our own ways.*  
(Umbrella)

The findings of the study revealed that the issue of collaboration towards the enhancement of learner integration at Therry high school takes place in many ways including daily congregation, sport activities, dramatic art, and multicultural dance (Kwaito, gumboot dancing, traditional Zulu dancing, Indian dancing, and Hip Hop) that takes place in this school. This was evidenced by the comment of the co-researchers who pointed out that:

*(Mmh) for me enhancement is shaped when our teachers create a multicultural classroom activity that requires our voices and contributions that based on our own lived experiences.* (Bridge)

Kamenopoulou (2017); Dubow, Huesmann, Boxer, Smith, Landau, Dvir-Gvirsman and Shikaki (2019); and Rombaoa (2019) viewed learner integration as a means of putting different cultures, religions, sexes, statuses, and ethnic groups together based on their positive moral concepts. It is essential that for the learners to be fully integrated into their school first, they need to know, understand, and accept each other and thus, this will help them to appreciate and respect one another (Cerna, 2019; Li, 2019; Smadi & Raman, 2020). Hence, with the enhancement of learner integration in schools, learners are required not to give up their own characters, and their norms nor to focus on their differences. Research by Leadbeatter (2021, p. 17) mentions that “knowledge is power, and ignorance is oppression”, this means that learners will be oppressed if they do not know, understand, or appreciate the diversity in their learning environment.

The PAR design that was employed in this study made the study resonate with this research design which enabled equality between the researcher and all people involved in the research process (Dube, 2016; Mbambo, 2019). The PAR design advocates equal collaboration in the research process whereby the researcher and co-researchers tend to work cooperatively as partners in a manner that leads to action for change (Bradbury, 2015; Chidarikire, 2017;

Walker, 2018). Moreover, the findings of the study correspond with the PAR design assumptions as the research process was conducted and observed well within the process of disputing power inequalities and change in the whole research process to be an extensive justice and equality process (Dube, 2016; Coghlan, 2019; Husni, 2020). This implies that PAR design helped the study to shape the enhancement of learner integration by advocating equality, integrity, cooperation and collaboration by valuing and appreciating all people involved in the research process (Fine & Torre, 2019; Mbambo, 2019).

To explain further, bodies of literature (Kramer-Roy, 2015; Sudan & Zuin, 2018) reveal that the research process should empower and encourage the co-researchers to collaboratively engage in the research in order to construct their own understanding of the researched phenomenon. Darder (2015) argues that collaboration and active engagement are vital as they can emancipate people and also advance democracy and equality throughout the research process. Moreover, it is paramount that all the co-researchers be empowered so they can develop a sense of ownership and feel that they are educational professionals because the CER framework does not only focus on the improvement and transformation of the situations in the research sites but also on changing the systems of the organisation itself into one that is more cooperative, and characterised by integrity and responsiveness (Hlalele, 2014; Manual, 2016; Fook, 2017). Thus, the findings of this study concur with Kramer-Roy (2015) and Sudan and Zuin (2018) who believe that the CER framework sets co-researchers free from any form of constraint which in return improves their understanding and empowerment as well as enhances their engagement and participation in the organisation through meaningful collaboration.

#### **6.2.2.3 Inspirations across the curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities**

Dynamic strategies towards the enhancement of learner integration can be appreciated from multiple perspectives; this includes such aspects as the learners having opportunities to participate in academic, sociocultural and physical well-being activities at school (Padayachee, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). The inspiration across the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities was reported to have significant impacts on both learners' behaviour and their academic achievements (Dewey, 2019; Tchamyou, 2020). Caena and Redecker (2019); Francis (2019); and Hersh and Elley (2019) confirmed that learner integration enhancement at school has direct connections with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that relate to the learners' lives at school and outside the school. However, most of the dynamic strategies mentioned in

many research studies tend to correspond with the improvement of teaching and learning processes whereby teachers and schools' managers are advised to promote inclusivity in school and to adopt a holistic approach that takes into consideration individual differences, and the socio-cultural and psycho-social issues of the learner (Dewey, 2019; Hersh & Elley, 2019; Shibiti, 2020).

Psychological perspectives on the enhancement of learner integration suggest that active involvement of the learners in curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs play an essential role in supporting learners to make healthy lifestyle choices and it also helps them to understand and to be able to deal with the impact of their choices on their well-being (Nwokedi, 2015; Hockly, 2018; Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020). Lawrence and Nkoane (2020), further argue that an adolescent's age is a critical factor in learners who are developing their long-term behaviour and attitudes toward their well-being and lifestyle choices. Therefore, the active involvement of the learners in academic, sociocultural and physical activities during their adolescent phase helps them to develop resilient behaviour patterns that help them to manage their mental and physical well-being throughout their lives (Zeeb, Biwer, Brunner, Leuders & Renkl, 2019; Fegert, Vitiello, Plener & Clemens, 2020). The enhancement of learner integration through active involvement in academic, socio-cultural and physical activities was elucidated by the co-researchers' comments as follows:

*(Mmh) with inspiration across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being involvement the enhancement is shaped in a such way that (Eeh) these aspects tend to promote active participation of the learner in the curricular, extracurricular, cultural and community activities. (Principal)*

Another co-researcher also mentioned that:

*(Eeh) an inspiration across the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects shape the enhancement of learner integration in the way that our role in the classrooms changed from main actors into facilitators. (Female teacher)*

Fegert et al., (2020) pointed out that enhancement towards learner integration is shaped because there is a direct link between the involvement of sociocultural and physical activities with

academic achievement and vice versa. This implies that active involvement in academic, socio-cultural, and physical activities improves learning and boosts learners' ability to concentrate in the classroom. According to Leadbeatter (2021) the concept of learner integration emphasises the learning environment that will consider and view the learner as a whole person. This implies that in order for the school to have a successful enhancement of learner integration, every part of the learner including his/her mind, body, emotions, and spirit should be well developed and be integrated at the same time into a whole person. One co-researcher commented that:

*(Mmh) these aspects guided our school programmes to develop some protective dynamics that promote our mental health and well-being (Eeh) which helps us to increase confidence develop a sense of belonging and to develop holistically. (Eagle)*

Bradley (2020) strongly supported the belief that active involvement in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities provides the learner with the emotional resources to “step out of their intellectual comfort zone and being able to explore new skills, ideas, knowledge and new ways of thinking which is fundamental to their educational achievement” (Bradley, 2020, p. 124). Some of the comments from the co-researchers also alluded to this:

*(Mmh) inspirations within the academic, socio-cultural and physical well-being aspects shape the enhancement of our integration in a way that it exposes us into cooperative learning (Eeh) together with the diverse perspectives and lived experiences that are different from our own. (Star)*

The concept of active involvement seems to correspond to the principle of the PAR design which increases the ground for responses to the research problem while providing guidance to both the researcher and co-researchers in proposing the solutions to the problem researched (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Lewis, 2015; Smith, 2015). Isaacs, Roman, and Carlson (2020); Oladeinde, Mabetha, Twine, Hove, Van der Merwe, Byass & D'Ambruoso, 2020) assert that the PAR design encourages the active involvement of co-researchers from diverse backgrounds, and it considers their opinions, views, and experiences as valuable contributions to the research data. This also seems to correspond with the pluralism tendency of the CER theory that turns educational research to focus mainly on the critical comprehension of the co-researchers so as to prompt systematic changes that will lead to the transformation of structures,

practices, and programmes in the learning environment through active involvement, equal participation, collaboration and empowerment (Vinz, 2016; Hoggan, Malkki & Finnegan, 2017; Hooley et al., 2018). This notion is supported by Darder (2015); Walter (2017); and Ledwith (2020) who point out that the CER theoretical framework supports purposeful and emancipatory involvement between the researcher and all the co-researchers involved in the research.

The findings of this subtheme revealed that inspiration across the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities corresponds to the CER and PAR perspectives of active involvement and participation since both concepts emphasise that actions in action research should be taken by members of the community affected directly by the research phenomenon (Oladeinde et al., 2020; Wheeler et al., 2020). On the other hand, influences across academic, socio-cultural, and physical activities are mentioned to be crucial components in developing important democratic competence at school (Tunu, 2019; Lang, 2021). This is because these three aspects make the school programmes, and practices more flexible and adaptable which promotes the openness, tolerance, and celebration of existing differences.

Drawing from the above explanations this study maintains that in order to enhance the learner integration phenomenon the school needs to encourage social integration and interaction among the educational stakeholders from the school and its local community. By doing so, the school will be able to promote and enhance the capabilities of the learners to evaluate their self-worth and to care for themselves and others as well as to contribute to an empathetic learning environment. Such a learning environment encourages free and fair cross-cultural interactions and mutual relationships which are the keys to successful learner integration in a school.

### **6.2.3 The understanding of learner integration is significant for its enhancement**

In the discussion and synthesis of the findings on themes one and two as presented above, the findings outline different understandings of the learner integration phenomenon as well as the dynamic strategies towards the enhancement that were clearly explained. The discussion and synthesis also embrace both the CER and the PAR design perspectives that were interconnected to the findings of the study in both facets of the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis provided the discussion on the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This theme prompts the answers to the third research question which co-researchers were asked to explain *Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?* The analysis of data generated from the multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice visual-based method revealed the findings that determined three influences of the learner integration phenomenon which are *averting of psycho-socio problems; improving social skills and being resilient; and enhancing academic skills.*

The significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in schools were discussed in the studies done in Latin American region, in which the concept of learner integration seemed to provide the response to discriminatory education systems (Medda-Windischer, 2015; Nickson, 2016; Munteanu, 2019). Some literature mentioned that the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in educational institutions are crucial as the concepts foster creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration among the learners and other stakeholders (Smadi & Raman, 2020; Lang, 2021). Bradley (2020) and Fegert et al. (2020) assert that for the school to promote successful academic achievement in its learners, the understanding and enhancing of learner integration are extremely effective approaches since the concept tends to help learners to develop multifaceted capabilities and also to be able to grasp the important role of interrelationships in their real lives.

The discussion and synthesis of findings from the above-mentioned influences of the learner integration phenomenon were inspired by the interpretation of perspectives and assumptions of CER theory and PAR design that were employed in this study. The below sections also include direct quotes from my co-researchers' ideas, views, perceptions and knowledge on explaining the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in their school.

#### **6.2.3.1 Averting of psycho-social- problems**

The first influence that showed the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in an Ex-Model C school was identified during the empirical data generation as the challenges that are currently being experienced by the learners in their



learning environment. Findings from the study revealed the divergent viewpoints and interpretations of the challenges regarding learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, which led to the impacts that affect learners due to the lack of effective integration in schools. Findings from this subtheme further revealed the presence of psychosocial challenges, as identified in chapter 5(5.2.3.1). This resonates with the literature from the United Kingdom (UK) that poor or lack of effective learner integration in schools normally causes struggle in the learners while trying to adapt to the new school culture and while adjusting to their learning environment (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Smadi & Raman, 2020).

Generally, in the literature, it is found that lack of effective learner integration may cause some psychosocial challenges such as poor socialisation, low self-esteem, lack of a sense of belonging, feelings of alienation, poor self-confidence, anxiety, and feelings of stress and depression in the learners in their learning environment (Hockly, 2018; Nwokedi, 2019; Lawrence & Nkoane, 2020). Drawing from the findings of the study, the significance and the need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration was viewed as a means to deal with the psychosocial challenges that were mentioned by the co-researchers as the major problem towards learners' academic achievement. The following comments from my co-researchers illustrate this challenge as follows:

*(Mmh) there is this feeling of being sitting on an edge (giggles) when they facing new people, new things, new tasks, etc. (And, Jah!) I admit that our learners do have this kind of feeling of not being sure of what they are doing, others seeing our environment as not welcoming as it ought to be ... which I also agree that it affects their learning and academic achievements in one way or another. (Principal)*

In like manner, one teacher identified stress as another psychosocial challenge currently experienced by the learners at Therry high school. The teacher advocated;

*(Eeh) with adolescent age of most of our learners here in school is the among the major factor for most of their stress-related issues (Clears throat). Some stresses are caused by emotional problems that are caused by their family members and issues at home, separation of parents and divorces ...*

*or sometimes the learner him/ herself facing their own personal conflicts with peers. (Male teacher)*

In addition, lack of socialisation was also identified to among the challenges that affect the learning process of the learners at Therry High school. The following quotations were demonstrated by the co-researchers as follows;

*(Mmh) I noticed that most of the learners are experiencing challenges on getting close to other learners and teachers of other races, ethnic groups or other cultures. (She added) it is normal to see them in groups of the same races or ethnic groups here in our school. (Female teacher)*

In the same note, Umbrella also pointed out that:

*(Mmh) honestly speaking our social life between us learners....it is very poor. I said so ... because I have not really found a close interaction between myself and other learners of different races or ethnic groups. It is like what Mrs. Munira said it is normal for a black learner to get close or be friended with her or his fellow blacks, Indian with Indians or white with whites.*

The findings of the study identified another challenge which is socio-economic that is currently experienced by the learners at Therry High School. These socio-economic challenges were related to the financial demands identified by the learners as the major barrier to their learning process. As evidenced by the co-researchers' comments;

*(Eish) lack of scholarship is a major hindrance factor to our learning and development here at school because most of our learning materials normally make copies, some projects and other educational events like executions need some cash to be involved. (Umbrella)*

In like manner, Star also supported this:

*On top of copies and those project materials which we are buying ourselves to complete our project tasks, our school fees normally increase for 10% every year.so without a scholarship, it is a big challenge honestly. (Star)*

Based on the general understanding of the learner integration phenomenon, scholars believe that learner integration represents or implies something better or of a higher order or a superior learning process in schools (Phelps-ward, 2020; Leadbeatter, 2021). Learner integration is at the core of some of the most widely known solutions that were/are established for redressing and dealing with learning challenges faced by learners in their learning environment (Person, 2017; Naidoo, 2018). Meanwhile, scholars like Machaba (2016) and Themane and Thobejane (2019) advised that due to the increasing demand for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in schools, stakeholders must do the extra intellectual work that will lead the learners to move from their basic understanding of this phenomenon to one that is relational. This will open the learners' possibilities for extending abstracts, conceptualisation, and realisation of integration in schools (Themane & Thobejane, 2019).

Likewise, the usage of the CER theoretical framework and PAR design in this study resonated with the study agenda of addressing integration challenges that are currently being experienced by learners in a selected Ex-Model C school. In response to the growing demand for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration at Therry High school, the PAR's principle of cooperative research ownership turns the critical participatory action research into becoming more inclusionary in nature which also complements the agenda of CER theory which is geared towards emancipation and empowerment (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Starr, 2019). The PAR design and the CER theory assumptions seem to be relevant and to influence the findings of this subtheme because these two concepts are emphasising the cooperation and collaboration tendency in any action research (Dube, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017; Masimanga, 2017).

As I mentioned earlier in Chapter One (1.2) the education system in South Africa during the apartheid era was divided in terms of race and language, as indicated in the study by Sayed and Ahmed (2015) and Freidus (2019) which revealed that the educational segregation system under the apartheid policy created deceitful contingent realities in South African society and schools were defined by class, language, and race. That is why, in this study, the learner integration concept is interlinked and interrelated with the emancipation aspect within the selected Ex-Model C school because I am conscious of the previous educational system (apartheid system) in South Africa which created a constant feature of vagueness not only in the schools but also in the whole South African society.

The body of literature revealed that the aim of the CER theoretical framework in educational action research is to solve particular problems that have been identified in the research context (Gandhi, 2019 & Lindahl, 2020). The application of CER perspectives in an action research study seemed to put great stress on empowering and liberating of people from their several challenges (Maboya, 2014; Masimanga, 2017; Pearson, 2017). It is argued that CER and PAR designs aim at emancipating and liberating human beings from the circumstances which enslave them through all forms of oppression and social injustices (Dube & Hlalele, 2018).

The CER theoretical framework and the PAR design both encourage collaboration, empowerment, and active participation of the co-researchers throughout the study (Dube, 2016; Chidarikire, 2017; Mokotjo, 2017). The findings from this subtheme alluded to the fact that the usage of the CER theoretical framework and PAR design in the study promoted the sense and realisation of the collaboration, cooperation, and active participation principles in finding solutions to the challenges that were identified by the co-researchers in the research context.

#### **6.2.3.2 Improving social skills and being resilient**

The data generated from multi-stakeholder meetings and the photovoice visual data method revealed that there is an influence of learner integration phenomenon that is related to the improvement of social skills which helps the learner to become resilient in his or her learning environment. It is mentioned that the development of a sense of belonging is positively associated with mental health and personal well-being in general (Bradley, 2020 & Lang, 2021). In fact, the feeling of belonging and personal well-being is viewed as aspects that have inspired the realisation of learners' identity and the extent to which they feel appreciated, valued, accepted, and treated accordingly (Fegert et al., 2020).

In addition, a body of knowledge revealed that improved social skills mostly influenced by the promotion of a sense of belonging and well-being in the learners which also corresponds to the concept of social inclusion in schools (Leadbeatter, 2021). This is because the global society changed the whole world into a small global village that leads schools to have learners of different languages, cultures, races, and different backgrounds to a greater extent than ever before. Moreover, this showed that the need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration not only improves and promotes a sense of belonging and well-being in the learners but also, it enables them to feel secure, protected, safe, and welcomed and that feeling always

tends to motivate and encourage them to achieve better in their academic endeavours (Mahlo, 2017; Francis, 2019; Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020).

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) of 2018 acknowledges that learners in a well-integrated school are more likely to perform well in their academic endeavours (DOE, 2018). Gillborn (2014), Berryhill and Vennum (2015) and Savery (2015) have recognised the importance of learner integration in American schools as a tool for safety, care, and support for the learners. This is because the concept creates interaction and collaboration in the learning environment which ensures peace and harmony that results in better academic achievement. Some scholars suggest that enhancement of learner integration in American schools not only creates the feeling of being supported and included but also it encourages the learner to reveal their hidden potentials (Hilliger, Ortiz-Rojas, Pesantez-Cabrera, Scheihing, Tsai, Munoz-Merino & Perez-Sanagustin (2020).

Essentially, co-researchers' comments indicated that learner integration has a huge impact not only on learners' academic achievements but also on their overall well-being as adolescents and later on as adults. Co-researchers' perceptions suggest that with the understanding and enhancing of learner integration, their school will be able to deal effectively with the rising rates of psychosocial challenges such as teenage suicide, social isolation, loneliness, being alienated, and poor self-confidence among learners. This implies that effective learner integration at school will encourage safety, well-being, and a sense of belonging for all learners regardless of their historical backgrounds or family issues. The comments from the co-researchers illustrate the issue of well-being and a sense of belonging as follows;

*(Mmh) I believe the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in our school will significantly promote the feeling of being valued, prioritised, and connected to our learners within and outside the school environment.*

(Male teacher)

Learners' comments indicated that learner integration is significant in supporting their lives not just in their academic work but also with their emotional support problems. *Star* pointed out that:

*For me ... the understanding and enhancing of learner integration are crucial as they encourage and help us to grow and develop socially and mentally also, we are becoming highly motivated with our schoolwork while we develop a high sense of school belonging and valuing our learning environment. (Star)*

The significance and need for learner integration were mentioned in research by Anjum, McVittie, and McKinlay (2018) and Nwokedi (2019) who point out that the integration notion provides learners with an intrinsic motivation that makes them feel at ease in their learning environment. The sense of belonging and well-being of learners normally prevents a high dropout rate and depression problems in educational institutions by promoting their motivation and providing encouragement to face any challenges in their learning process (Chisholm, 2015; Froiland & Worrell, 2016; Anjum et al., 2018). As was evidenced from one of the co-researchers in her comment below;

*(Eeh) I have read one book that says 'sense of belonging is positively associated with academic success and personal motivation' so, it's true that the understanding and enhancing of learner integration brought a huge sense of comfortableness to us learners ... which in return tends to significantly boost our learning motivation, decreases the dropout rates and help us to achieve better in academic too. (Bridge)*

Promotion of a sense of belonging and well-being in the learners at schools has been noted as having a significant impact on the learners as whole persons since they are becoming more aware of themselves as individuals and it helps them to develop positive self-images in their learning environment (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2014; McCrimmon, 2015; Llinares, 2015). Phelpsward (2020) claims that the main goal for learner integration is not only on learners' academic achievement but also, to help them to develop as complete human beings for their entire lives.

In connection to the CER theoretical framework and PAR research design, the findings of this subtheme corresponded perfectly with the communicative interaction tendency that awarded respect to the co-researchers by valuing their opinions, perceptions, and contribution they brought to the study (Chidarikire, 2017; Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Labbe, Mahmood, Routhier, Prescott, Lacroix, Miller & Mortenson, 2021). As mentioned earlier, the study was

epistemologically embedded in CER theory and PAR design and thus, these two concepts are underpinned by the emancipation, collaboration, and democratic values that encourage social changes by promoting active participation, creativity, and innovation from the co-researchers of the study. Giroux, (2020), Macrine, (2020), Ngwenya (2018); Venter & Goede (2018); and Wood (2020) confirm that PAR is a research design that contributes to a sense of belonging and well-being by treating the co-researchers as experts by ensuring that they use their lived experiences related to the research phenomenon to bring about positive impacts in their community.

The usage of the CER theoretical framework and PAR design in the study promoted a sense of belonging and well-being through collaboration, cooperation, and active participation principles that enabled the co-researcher to claim ownership of the study. The findings of the study revealed that the sense of belonging and well-being of the co-researchers was promoted through the emphasis in the PAR and CER theories on handling and treating the co-researchers with respect and with recognition of equality regardless of their differences that come with race, and language, age or gender (Tchamyu, 2020). Both the CER and the PAR designs tend to advance the agenda for equality and equity in educational institutions in all aspects by advocating freedom of participation, collaboration, active engagement, and social justice for all in the learning environment (Fine & Torre, 2019; Poster, 2019; Kunene & Mthethwa, 2020).

The finding of this subtheme corresponded to the CER and PAR as they both recognise that it is important for all the co-researchers to be empowered in the research process so they can develop a sense of ownership of the research and feel that they are educational professionals. These two concepts do not only focus on the improvement and transformation of the situations in the research sites but also on the change in the systems of the organisation itself on how to treat people (Hlalele, 2014; Manual, 2016; Fook, 2017). CER and PAR are emancipatory in nature as they both preach closeness, collaboration, and active participation throughout the research process (Tracy, 2019; William & Keady, 2021), in return this aspect tends to increase the feeling of comfort and confidence in the co-researchers.

### **6.2.3.3 Enhancing academic skills**

Persistently large racial achievement gaps in South Africa seem to threaten some of the learners' dreams (Chisholm, 2015; Miles & Naidoo, 2017). Due to the ongoing struggles that

DOE is facing since 1994 to create equality and equity in the countries' education system, the empirical evidence from the research revealed that South African education institutions were and still are facing a lack of true racial equality for the opportunities and this calls for more and comprehensive interventions to tackle the racial achievement gaps (Kotze, Van der Westhuizen & Bernard, 2017; Mahlo, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019). Lawrence and Nkoane (2020) confirm that achievement gaps normally persist between learners of different ethnic groups, based on language, race, culture, and socio-economic status (SES), and these affect nearly every aspect of a learner's life and capabilities.

Some research maintained that due to the racism under the previous government system that introduced the exclusionary features in South African society caused some race groups to endure generational poverty (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Naidoo, 2015; Gamoran & An, 2016). Kotze et al., (2017); Zoch (2017); Kapalu and Mahlo (2019) agree that racial achievement gaps were created by the inequalities within both demographic locations and in the education system. This implies that some of the racial achievement gap factors are significantly influenced by environmental aspects such as living in poverty, poor infrastructure as well as poor provision of social services that contribute to higher rates of learner absenteeism, the high rate of dropouts, and poor academic achievement.

A body of literature has argued that even after the democratically elected government in 1994 the apartheid legacy in the education system still lives on as the poor South Africans are still getting a poor education as compared to their rich colleagues which plays itself out in differential, racial achievement (Hlalele, 2014; Spaull, 2015; Moses, Van der Berg & Rich, 2017). Some research also notes that the impact of the previous education system is still being felt as evidenced across our wide range of demographics in South African schools including what is known as racial achievement gaps in our learners (Naidoo, 2018; Francis, 2019; Freidus, 2019). It was noted that racial achievement gaps in the South African education system started during the peak years of the apartheid government system (Sayed & Ahmed, 2015; Olivier, 2017; Motala, 2019). After the advent of democracy in 1994, the country's education system was followed by many desegregation policies and reforms that mainly focused on democratisation and promotion of equity and equality in South African schools (Clark, 2013; Stuurman, 2013; Moloi, 2019). Recently, research on diversity in schools revealed that although many reforms and policies were passed to address the issue of inequality and to bring



changes in the South African education system the level of achievement gaps in learners of different races are still evident (Grobler, Moloi & Ayres, 2017; Chanee, 2020).

Some scholars summarised their empirical research on inclusion in South Africa by suggesting some strategies for reducing and averting racial achievement gaps specifically in multicultural learning environments and one among those strategies was mentioned to be an effective learner integration in schools (Ayaya, Makoele & Van der Merwe, 2021). Therefore, the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration were viewed by the co-researchers of the study as a vital way of enhancing academic skills in all learners regardless of their ethnic group, language, or economic status. The principal stated:

*(Mmh) until now we are still confronting the challenges of the previous education system ... talking of racial achievement gaps problem for which we have no answers yet and we are wrestling with conflicting perspectives and interpretations of this issue every single day, there is definitely need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in our school.*

It is confirmed that there is a wide disparity when it comes to learners' academic success in South African multicultural schools (Mhlana, Dunga & Moloi, 2021). Meanwhile, some studies agreed that in order for the multicultural school to reduce racial achievement gaps for learners there should be equitable access to school resources which also she claimed to be a major cause for racial achievement gaps (Moloi, 2019; Baruah, 2020 & Ayaya et al., 2021). This was confirmed by one of the co-researchers who mentioned that:

*Learner integration will help to reduce racial achievement disparities in accessing well-maintained school facilities ... will also create ease in approaching ways of our qualified teachers and other professionals which in return. It will help us to deal with our challenging projects and subjects too (deep breath) and yep! every learner will achieve his / her academic goals successfully. (Umbrella)*

Scholarly works also allude to the presence of racial achievement gap problems that need close attention from all the stakeholders involved in educational matters along with a variety of long-term intervention strategies and integrative policies in schools (Froiland & Worrell, 2016;

Melabiotis, 2018; Slabbert & Naude, 2022). Moreover, the significance and need for learner integration in schools were viewed by the co-researchers as an intervention for reducing racial prejudices and for the promotion of intellectual competence development. Findings from these subthemes revealed that there is a need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration as it will significantly avert racial stereotyping. According to the co-researchers stereotyping is based on racial or ethnic considerations resulting in miscalculations that undermine one's ability to apply problem-solving skills and this paves the way to the racial achievement gaps. The comments of co-researchers' assert that;

*The understanding and enhancing of learner integration will significantly help us to get to know one another's history which will break down all the stereotypes and increase our learning opportunities as well as our cognitive capabilities and this will avert the racial achievement gaps. (Eagle)*

Furthermore, some research maintained that the notion of learner integration is not only focusing on giving the learners "knowledge but also to train them to translate that knowledge into true wisdom" (Fine & Torre, 2019, p. 22). Leadbeatter (2021) notes that with effective strategies for learner integration the schools will create significant cooperation between the school, community, and the whole society, which should result to the averting of racial achievement gaps in the education system. In addition, the concept of learner integration encompasses not only how the schools make an effort to provide better academic results for the learners, but also to turn those learners into becoming good citizens in the future (Tchamyau, 2020). A co-researcher commented:

*Racial achievement gaps will be only averted through an integrative learning approach because it intends to promote active involvement and collaboration of learners and encourage them to work together and sharing of thoughts to address complex problems they are or will face in their future lives. (Male teacher)*

The findings also revealed that learner integration encourages no division between the school community and the whole community because learners' lives and knowledge are dependent on the quality of education and academic achievements. The findings of the study correspond with the PAR design and CER theoretical framework employed in the study as both tend to promote

social justice while emancipating the society by transforming all forms of inequalities and imbalances in the research context (Chidarikire, 2017); Mokotjo, 2017; Masimanga, 2017).

Despite the fact that the problems in the educational context are complex, this is why the field of social science comprehends critical research as the ground for the critical conversation that has the responsibility to convey a critical view that seeks to identify and address the problem existing in the research context (Labbe et al., 2021; Levitt, Morill, Collins & Rizo, 2021). The use of the CER theoretical framework in the study brought a systematic perspective to the conveying of information and an understanding of the issue of racial achievement gaps while incorporating critical perspectives such as emancipation, liberation, and social justice that existed in both CER and PAR design to address this issue. Some studies revealed that CER is one of the most potent and effective means of creating equal conditions under which the disparity of racial achievement can be averted through the demonstration of equal positions in academic identities and achievement for all learners regardless of their differences (Poster, 2019 & Phelps-ward, 2020).

The emancipatory tendency of both CER and PAR was viewed as very important when considering social systems wherein equality of opportunities, control, and power relations are involved. Also, research by Wood (2019) confirms that the emancipatory tendency of PAR and CER tends to create knowledge which is concerned with freedom of people from constraints in their social structure. It is believed that the emancipatory character of PAR and CER describes the procedures through which the co-researchers become free from suppressive research process (Walker, Martinez-Vargas & Mkwanzani, 2020).

Some researchers suggested that the emancipatory tendency of PAR and CER emphasise the formation of social norms, values, and culture that encourages the improvement of human liberties (Cordeiro, Soares & Rittenmeyer, 2017). Thus, the emancipatory tendency tends to destroy the racial myths, stereotypes, and values that have been conveyed to the oppressed by the oppressor to maintain the oppressors' position and privilege (Taylor, 2019). This implies that CER and PAR mainly focus on the analysis of unjust, oppressive structures and practices that diminish people's ability to achieve humanity. Furthermore, researchers claimed that the adaptation of CER and PAR in a study is symptomatic of the liberation and emancipation of

people in the research context (Williams & Keady, 2021). As one of the co-researchers remarked:

*With such kind of learning environment promotion of creativity, deep learning, learning motivations, self-motivation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills are constantly ... and beneficially improves the achieving gaps to all learners. (Eagle)*

This implies that with the great exposure to the CER and PAR designs the findings also found that racial achievement gaps can be averted by all stakeholders in educational matters to warrant serious attention to developing several strategies that aimed to bring a sense of equality and equity in the education system for all races. The significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration have been well discussed and synthesised in this study that considered that this phenomenon deserves attention because it resonates very well with morals, ethics, and norms for social justice, liberation, and emancipation of the human being that have been raised in the body of literature. A number of educational researchers have found that learners can only achieve their academic goals and develop holistically if they are effectively integrated into their learning environment. Therefore, the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in schools are evident and undeniable as the phenomenon tends to enhance learners' capabilities and their learning motivation which in return helps them to achieve their academic goals successfully.

To sum up, the above sections focused on the importance of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The co-researchers' excerpts and comments assert that the learner integration phenomenon will not only help learners to learn, grow and develop holistically, but also, it is a means for securing learners' full attention in their studies, while helping them to demonstrate a healthy mindset for their learning and their learning environment in general.

### **6.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed and synthesised the findings of the study to respond to the research questions which are:

- What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?

Besides, the chapter discussed, outlined and synthesised the findings by integrating the perspectives and assumptions of CER that were employed to frame this study. The chapter also infused the findings with characteristics and assumptions of the PAR research design of the study. The findings of the study were also aligned with relevant literature to have a link with the broad body of knowledge that exists on the learner integration phenomenon. In addition, the discussion and synthesis of the findings were accompanied by direct quotes from the co-researchers and explanations that ensured that the voices of my co-researchers remained essential to this discussion and synthesis of the findings of the study. The discussion and synthesis of the findings were based on three (3) main themes that emerged from the findings of the study namely; *Multi-perspectival understanding of the learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context*; *Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration*; *the significance for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration*. The results of the study also provided dense information regarding the issue researched by the co-researchers through their active participation, collective views, experiences, and active engagement in multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice sessions, and reflective writing activity data generation methods employed by the study.

It was found that learners become more interested, dedicated, and committed to their learning when they feel appreciated, recognised, and safe in their learning environment (Rozali, Puteh, Yunus, Khan & Khan, 2018; Meskill & Oliveira, 2019). The complexity of educational context problems forces many research studies to be grounded under the critical paradigm that is used as a tool for addressing the challenges in educational sites, systems and practices in schools and other educational institutions (Asghar, 2013; Gonsalvez, 2013; Wood, 2019). In an effort to address these challenges, some scholars suggested that inclusion in the education system should be compulsory to create equal, free and fair opportunities for all learners (Miles & Naidoo, 2017; Kapalu & Mahlo, 2019; Taylor, 2019).

With this in mind, different inclusive interventions have been suggested by different scholarly works from both intentional and local contexts that aimed to bring inclusion and create a responsive learning environment that will respond to learners' diversity. This study focused on the issue of learner integration as a means of creating a welcoming and conducive learning environment in schools. Besides, the study's main aim was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school, the critical perspectives from the critical paradigm, PAR, and CER theoretical frameworks were employed in the study to maintain critical conversations which helped the study significantly to convey critical views, thoughts and perspectives from the co-researchers that sought to identify and address learner integration phenomenon within the research context.

The discussions and synthesis of the study findings were derived from three influences of the learner integration phenomenon. The discussions of the study suggested that the learner integration phenomenon is essential and worthy of attention from all educational stakeholders because the notion tends to correspond very well with the morals, ethics, and norms for social justice, liberation, and emancipation of human beings as have been raised by different literature. The presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data on theme one (1) "*Multiperspectival understanding of learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school context*", as presented in Chapter Five (5.2.1) corresponds to the discussion and synthesis of section 6.2.1 of this chapter. Furthermore, this study agrees with Leadbeatter (2021) that knowledge of learner integration is power and that ignorance of it is oppression. Thus, schools will oppress their learners if they do not have the knowledge and if they do not understand and appreciate others around them. In addition, with the CER and PAR perspectives, this study allowed emancipated co-researchers to construct their understanding of the phenomenon researched from their points of view and perceptions that were based on their lived experiences.

The presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data on theme two which was *Dynamism in the enhancement of learner integration* as presented in Chapter Five (5.2.2) complement the discussion and synthesis under section 6.2.2 of this chapter. This study contends that in any multicultural learning environment learning about cultures only is not enough. Thus, learners need to live in, practice, and appreciate those cultures. With regard to CER and PAR principles of active participation and collaboration, these tend to guide the co-researchers to work

collaboratively regardless of their differences while appreciating one another's contributions on how to enhance learner integration in their school.

The presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data on theme number three which is “*the significance for the understanding and enhancing of learner integration*” which was presented in Chapter Five (5.2.3) complement the discussion and synthesis of the findings of section 6.2.3 of this chapter. This study maintains that learner integration intends to celebrate diversity and to create and promote the human spirit in the learners' lives. It also aims to prepare the learners for work, life, and leadership in a more collaborative, creative world, and it should also allow them to navigate deftly in dynamic and multicultural environments. The principles of CER and PAR guided the co-researchers of this study to translate their knowledge into significant wisdom and to be able to clearly see the goodness of learner integration in their school. The next chapter presents the summary, recommendations, implications, and limitations of the study. Also, the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge is clearly outlined and presented.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, CONTRIBUTION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed and synthesised the findings of the study by integrating the perspectives of the Critical Emancipatory Research theory (CE) with the assumptions of Participatory Action research design (PAR) and existing literature on the researched phenomenon relative to the main aim of the study which was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. This chapter is mainly concerned with presenting the summary, implications, and contribution of the study. Towards the end of the chapter, the recommendations, and limitations of the study are stated, and concluding remarks are offered.

The literature review undertaken for this thesis revealed that there is a paucity in the literature on the understanding of learner integration especially in Ex-Model C schools and on studies that proposed ways on how learner integration could be enhanced in these schools. Some researchers like Spaul, (2013), Radebe (2015), Maharaj, (2016), Francis, (2019) and Mavuru and Ramnarain, (2020) tried to explore the issue of learner integration in schools but failed to show how schools could create or provide meaningful ways to enhance learner integration in South African schools, particularly in Ex-Model C schools. This suggests that most of the Ex-Model C schools might not have the knowledge and understanding of what learner integration means. Hence, this study explored the understanding of learner integration on the part of the principal, two grade 11 teachers (male and female), and four grade 11 learners to see how they perceive this issue within their school and how they think this issue could be enhanced within a selected Ex-Model C school. Data generated through PAR design was guided by the three research questions:

- What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?



- Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?

In answering these questions this thesis employed the qualitative research approach within an interpretive-cum-critical paradigm to enable the active participation and engagement of the co-researchers in the study. The study also employed a participatory visual method (photovoice) for data generation to increase the active involvement and participation of the four co-researchers (learners). In consequence, while involving and engaging in the multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice sessions the co-researchers of the study thought critically about their teaching and learning environment at school and how the issue of learner integration is perceived within their school. In their contributions, the co-researchers of the study explained what learner integration means to them and what they felt to be the significance and need for the understanding and enhancing of this issue within the school context. They were also able to propose some solutions and to explain the what they think could enhance learner integration within the South African school context.

## **7.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

### **7.2.1 Chapter One: Introduction to the study**

In Chapter One, the study was introduced to the reader. The chapter also outlined the main aim of the study, the research questions, and the objectives of the study. Further, the background of the study and the nature of the phenomenon to be researched were described. The problem statement of the study pointed out that the current situation of learner integration in schools is primarily embedded in the previous education system in South Africa which failed to promote and maintain equality and fairness in the multicultural and diverse community of learners in the country. The chapter also introduced the concepts of CER, PAR, and CDA to the reader, and it declared the delimitations of the study.

### **7.2.2 Chapter Two: Theoretical framework**

This chapter focused on examining the origin of the CER, its advancement, its principles, and assumptions in the relation to the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a school context. The CER theoretical framework was employed in this study to explore the learner integration phenomenon in an Ex-Model C school learning environment and its

capacity to influence democracy, respect, and equality in this school which previously was based on a single race orientation. The chapter also reflected on the use of CER as a theoretical framework and highlighted the role of the researcher as well as the relationship between the researcher and co-researcher during the research process. Finally, the chapter provided a justification for using CER as a theoretical framework for this study by discussing some of the critical issues and reasons that brought CER into focus when dealing with the influence and emphasis of deliberation, inclusion, and integration of learners in a diverse community that historically experienced discrimination, inequality and segregation based on race, economic status, culture or gender.

### **7.2.3 Chapter Three: Review of related literature**

This chapter presented the literature review of works concerning the researched phenomenon to correspond with the research objectives of the study. The chapter provided the definitions of the operational concepts and explanations of the different definitions of learner integration phenomena from one context to another. The chapter also outlined the implementation of learner integration in schools which is emphasised by both international and national legislation and documents that were intentionally introduced to support and promote the right to equality and non-discriminatory education around the world.

The chapter further elucidated the significance of implementing learner integration in schools by reviewing different solutions to several challenges that might be caused by the lack of or poor learner integration in learning institutions. A review of the related literature also indicated some of the key elements for effective learner integration to address the anticipated threats that may be caused by impediments to the successful implementation of learner integration that were discussed in section 3.5 of this chapter.

### **7.2.4 Chapter Four: Research methodology and data generation process**

This chapter described the research schedules and procedures followed to comprehend the understanding and enhancing of learner integration knowledge. The chapter provided comprehensive information regarding the qualitative research approach, the interpretive-cum-critical research paradigm, and the PAR as the research design for this study. The justification for choosing the PAR research design and methodology adopted for this study was discussed with reasons being given for the crucial assumptions used to guide this study. Furthermore, the

data generation processes were explained showing how the co-researchers were engaged during the study and how data was analysed by using the three levels of CDA. The chapter also explained how trustworthiness was addressed and the way the ethical issues in the research were observed.

### **7.2.5 Chapter Five: Presentation and discussion of findings**

This chapter focused on the presentation and discussion of findings. Findings presented in this chapter answered the research questions of the study and eventually tended towards the achievement of the research aim which was to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Moreover, data presented in this chapter were analysed by using three levels of CDA. To promote the credibility of the study this chapter answered the research questions by using co-researchers' direct quotes and photographic interpretations presented by them during the photovoice sessions.

### **7.2.6 Chapter Six: Discussion and synthesis of the research findings**

This chapter discussed and synthesised the findings of the study that responded to the research questions and three themes emerged from these findings. The chapter also discussed, outlined, and contextualised the findings by integrating the perspectives and assumptions of CER theory that were employed to frame this study. The chapter also infused the findings with characteristics and assumptions of the PAR research design that were employed in the study. The findings of the study were aligned with relevant literature to have a link with the broad body of knowledge that exists on the learner integration phenomenon. In addition, the discussion and synthesis of the findings were accompanied by direct quotes from the co-researchers and explanations to ensure that the voices of my co-researchers remained essential to this discussion and synthesis of the findings of the study.

## **7.3 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY'S FINDINGS**

Despite the several achievements attained since the first South African democratic election in 1994, "the education experiences of a number of learners in South African schools are still dominated by the spectre of exclusion" (McKinney & Swartz, 2022, p. 369). This implies that the South African education system is still dismantling the apartheid legislative framework that institutionalised discrimination and exclusion in schools. It was declared in the research that

some South African schools still engage in some exclusionary practices such as gender exclusion whereby the school is identified to be only a girls' or a boys' school (Goldstone, 2017; Canham, 2019 & Francis, 2019). Some schools were also identified as operating under religious segregation whereby the school is identified to be only for followers of a certain religion, for instance, Muslim schools, Christian schools, or Hindu schools. This indicates that the perspectives, thoughts, perceptions, and opinions of how schools can move from being learner exclusive to the integration of a diverse population of learners and staff in South African schools have been silent for years now.

The importance of this study is that it recognises that systemic changes can only occur if the school, community, and curriculum developers commit themselves to the change process. The study also recognises that the role of all stakeholders is vital for learner integration to be successfully achieved. Moreover, when reflecting on the study findings of this thesis, I realised that I am reflecting on a journey, my personal journey into the process of building a more integrative school and school community. Just like any other journey, some of my research findings came with both intriguing and exciting experiences that took me out of my comfort zone and changed the way I was thinking forever.

Concerning the multi-perspectival understanding of the learner integration phenomenon, findings from the study acknowledged that school contexts and conditions may differ and that is why it provides the methodological contribution under the section 7.5.2 that should cater for the diverse demands of the learners and other stakeholders when describing the meaning of this phenomenon. Furthermore, with the contribution to practice in section 7.5.3 the findings of the study suggest how to deal with the challenges resulting from the multi-perspectival understanding of learner integration in schools without being inflexible or prescriptive. The information that I read about concerning the learner integration phenomenon was of great value and aligned with today's demand for its enhancement of it. The strength of the findings of the study lay in the fact that it revealed the dynamic nature of enhancing learner integration that it encourages the school, school community, and curriculum developers to work towards under the research-based approach. They need to reflect on their own roles, situations and the impact of each action done, and to find their own solutions in line with the enhancement of learner integration in schools.

I strongly believe that learner integration is an essential aspect of meeting the challenges posed by any multicultural education system. That is why the findings of the study also imply that the understanding of learner integration is significant for its enhancement. It is true that we cannot have a successful learner integration in schools if we do not consider, respect, and recognise the diverse elements that shape our understanding of this phenomenon.

The findings of the study have indicated that the learner integration phenomenon has multiple facets that have an impact on learners' growth and development in their learning environment. The findings of the study have highlighted how educational stakeholders such as community leaders, teachers, parents, etc. can play a significant role in the enhancement of learner integration in a school context. The engagement in transformative and participatory methods that is advocated by the study provided the basis for empowerment and holistic emancipation throughout the research process for the co-researchers of the study. The findings of the study revealed some of the threats to effective learner integration in a school context as explained in Chapter Tree (3.5). I have recommended in this chapter under section (7.6) that further studies should research the new networks and organisations of the educational stakeholders that exist inside and outside the school and how they can play a significant role in eradicating such threats or impediments that exist. Concerning this reflection, I hope that schools, communities and curriculum developers will find this study useful and that it will contribute to the successful implementation of learner integration in schools.

## **7.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Findings from the study revealed several implications for the researched issue of learner integration. These implications are drawn from the discussion of the three themes that emerged from the findings of the study as follows:

### **7.4.1 Co-researchers' multi-perspectival understanding of the learner integration phenomenon**

The findings of the study revealed multiple understandings of the learner integration phenomenon when the co-researcher contributed their perceptions and opinions regarding the first theme which was mainly based on the construction of the knowledge of the learner integration phenomenon. The findings of the study also indicated that learners (minor co-researchers) know what they want from the school management in order to have that truthful

understanding and implementation of learner integration in their school. The implication of the findings from the first theme is that some of the school managements may not be able to serve the diverse needs and wishes of every learner, since their perceptions and opinions towards the understanding of the learner integration phenomenon are not the same.

#### **7.4.2 Dynamic nature for enhancing the learner integration phenomenon**

It was obvious from the findings from the second theme of the study that co-researchers possessed some intelligent potential and capabilities to suggest dynamic strategies for enhancing learner integration within their school. Findings from this theme indicated that effective learner integration in an Ex-Model C school could be possible through multidimensional strategies that could be employed by the school authority as well as the school community. The wide range of strategies suggested by the co-researchers including some psychosocial, emotional, and physical activities could lead to challenges for the school authority to employ them, especially during this time of Covid-19 pandemic as most of the schools do not allow unnecessary interaction between their learners, staff, and outsiders.

#### **7.4.3 The significance versus existing impediments for an effective learner integration**

Findings from the third theme of the study indicated that the learning environment in a selected Ex-Model C school contains some impediments that threaten the implementation and orientation of the key elements for effective learner integration. In their response, the co-researchers explained the significance and the need for effective learner integration. However, the present primitive perceptions and unchangeable systems are the main impediments that act as obstacles to the realisation and implementation of effective learner integration in a school. Thus, the implication of the findings is that existing impediments in a school could have deep roots within the school authority or even the community. As a result, this may be the reason why the school fails to have an effective learner integration for its learners.

### **7.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This study has brought to the fore the CER theory and PAR design to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. As mentioned in chapter 1(1.5) and chapter 7(7.1) there is a paucity of literature on the understanding and enhancing of

learner integration in South African schools; hence, this study employed PAR design to bring together some of the school (education) stakeholders to critically explore the issue of learner integration, while the main intention was to improve the current situation, making it an enriched one. Moreover, there has been a debate in the research field on the use of multiple data generation methods (data triangulation) to establish the authenticity of data generated in the investigation of the research problem. Through the multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice sessions, and reflective writing activity this study provides its contribution based on three categories, namely theoretical, methodological and practical contributions.

### **7.5.1 Theoretical contribution of the study**

The CER theory was employed as the perspective from which to frame this thesis. This theory provided insight into minimising the potential for those who are in the minority and who remain voiceless or marginalised (Pearson, 2017; Dube & Hlalele, 2018; Phelps-Ward, 2020). From this perspective, the study treated all the co-researchers as active beings, critical thinkers who are capable of engaging, interacting, and participating in the construction of knowledge based on the researched phenomenon. Furthermore, CER theory guided this study to impose levels of transparency by evoking emancipation and social justice with the co-researchers throughout the study. As evidenced by the study findings this study was not one-sided research whereby the researcher became the main producer of the knowledge; rather, the co-researchers of this study were treated as professionals and partners with the researcher.

Consequently, the study contributed to the empowerment and emancipatory agenda of CER theory by creating a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers. This study was also influenced by comradeship strategy, negotiation of power, and equal participation. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge of research grounded in the CER theory by involving the co-researchers in actual actions to solve the research problem; as a result, the co-researchers' critical thinking was enhanced. This study upheld the data generation process as influenced by four levels of the PAR design which promoted the dialogues. Thus, the study maintained a transparency because the CER is the perspective that plunges the researcher and co-researchers into an awareness of the assumptions and biases related to the research problem (Nilsen, 2015; Noel, 2016; Mokotjo, 2017; Omodan, 2019).

This study also showed that the issue of learner integration is linked to learners' growth and development within their learning environment. In other words, through the CER theoretical perspective, this study viewed the learner integration phenomenon as a crucial element for learners' emancipation and social justice that was not only concerned with their academic performance and achievement but also with their personal well-being, growth, and development. Consequently, in this study, the co-researchers became empowered by interacting equally with one another and they were able to exchange their skills, knowledge, and ideas related to the learner integration phenomenon. All the planned activities and agreements made were transparently agreed upon by the co-researchers and the researcher of the study. Therefore, the study brought together the diverse co-researchers' perceptions that were based on their diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and statuses that contributed to the constructed knowledge from the collected thoughts. The two-way respect and value for each other's opinions, views, and perspectives between the researcher and co-researchers of this study benefited them in developing their knowledge, skills, and self-sufficiency.

### **7.5.2 Methodological contribution of the study**

Concerning the methodological contribution, this study employed the PAR design. The choice of this research design was linked to the fact that the study is devoted to improving a challenging issue within the research context. Walker, Martinez-Vargas, and Mkwanzani (2020) confirm that the PAR design is a qualitative research design that recommends changing the position of the co-researchers while encouraging their empowerment and allowing them to have full control of the research process. Therefore, the PAR design in this study contributes to the research process in a democratic way because both the researcher and co-researchers are working as partners throughout the research process.

This study makes a major methodological contribution to the existing body of knowledge by generating the data by using three data generation methods namely, multi-stakeholder meetings, a photovoice visual art based, and a reflective writing activity. Scholarly works indicate that the use of multiple methods to generate data is an efficient way of capturing the co-researchers' perceptions whilst generating authentic data on the issue researched (Patkar, 2018; Wessels & Wood, 2019; Williams & Keady, 2021). This study employed multi-stakeholder meetings as a main or major data generation method that was guided by four levels of PAR design and was conducted under two PAR circles as explained in Chapter Four (4.9.2)



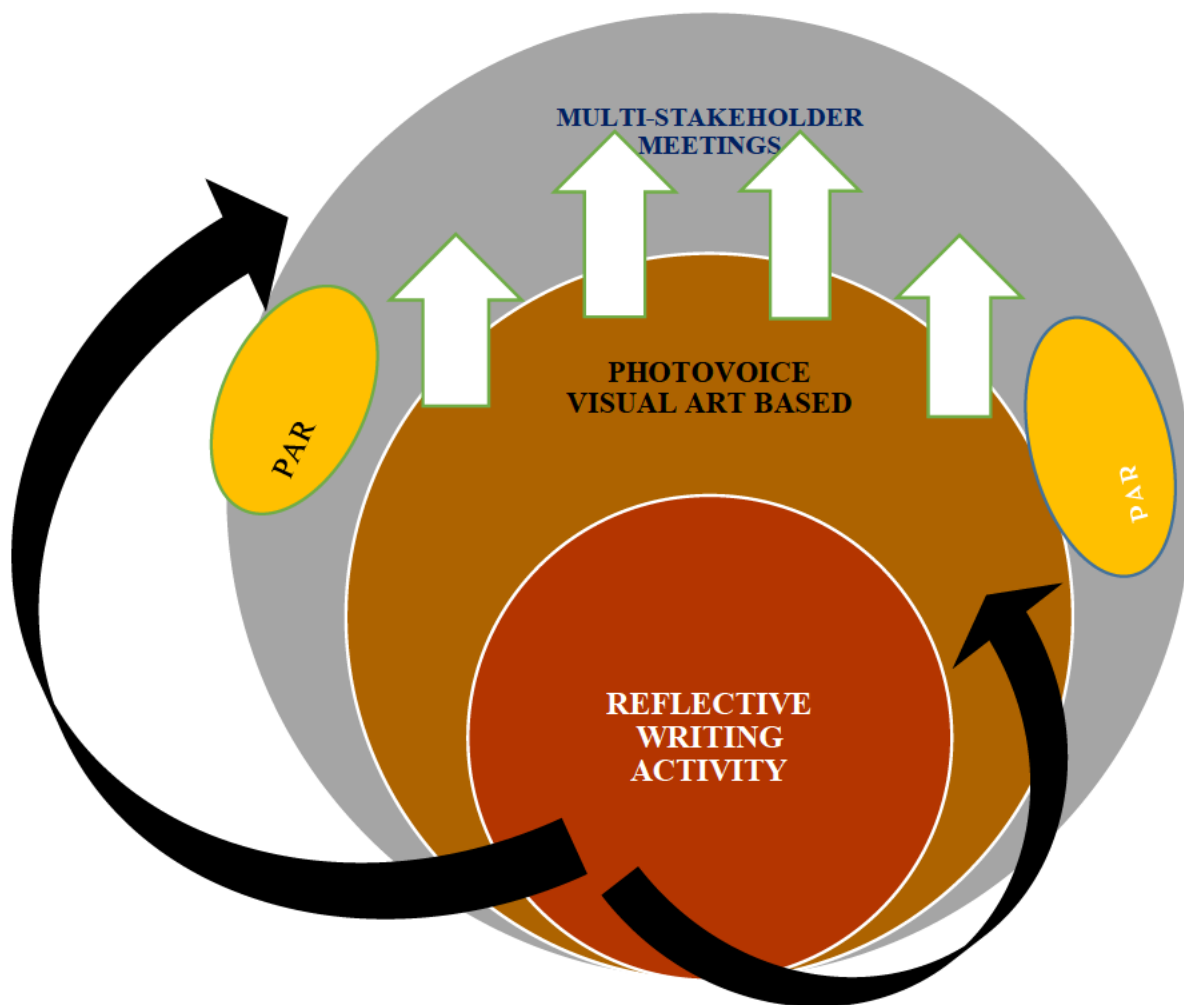
of this study. Consequently, the multi-stakeholder meetings enabled the co-researchers to provide authentic perspectives that were based on their lived experiences, feelings, and thoughts regarding the learner integration phenomenon.

The methodological contribution of this study also involved the use of a photovoice visual art-based exercise as the second data generation method. In this study, the photovoice method was used to complement the data generated from the multi-stakeholder meetings. The four photovoice sessions were used to generate data; also these four sessions were influenced and guided by the four levels of PAR design as explained in Chapter Four (4.9.3.1) of the study. The photovoice data generation method in this study enabled the co-researchers to express freely their understanding and dynamic strategies that they thought could enhance the implementation of learner integration within their school. Moreover, the study extends the existing body of knowledge on visual participatory methods such as photovoice as the study clearly stipulated the steps and process of photovoice sessions in figure 4.4 that were employed in this study.

Finally, the study emphasised critical thinking to the co-researchers of the study by engaging them in the third data generation method which was the reflective writing activity. With this data generation method, the co-researchers were involved in the process of evaluating, rating, and reflecting on the whole research process and the activities they were engaged in from day one till the end of the research process. This study contributes to the methodological aspect by employing the reflective writing activity as the third data generation method, which critically evaluated the previous data generation methods namely, multi-stakeholder meetings and the photovoice visual art-based method. The reflective writing activity enhanced the creativity and innovative skills of the co-researchers of the study as the writings involved their self-expression towards the research process and these expressions were derived from different angles, perspectives and experiences.

The methodological contribution of the study that resulted from these three data generation methods was that the study provided the solid understanding of the learner integration phenomenon. Also, dynamic strategies proposed by the co-researchers for the enhancement of learner integration were considered from different angles with a view to possible utilisation. The study showed that understanding complex issues such as learner integration in learning

institutions need both the textual and visual presentation of data. Figure 7.1 below presents the visual presentation of the multiple data generation methods employed in this study to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.



**Figure 7.1:** A visual presentation of the methodological contribution of the study. (Figure designed by the researcher)

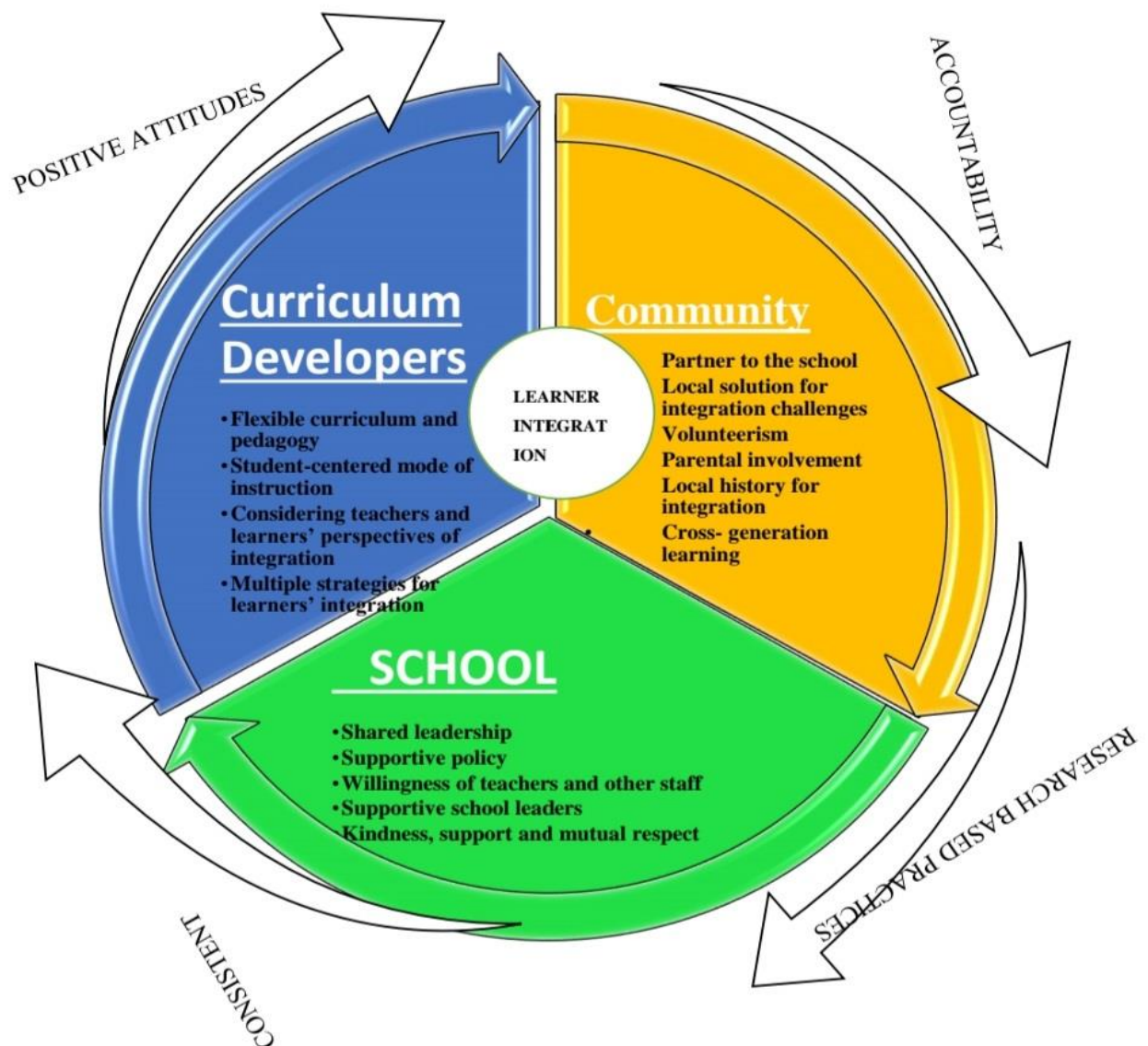
### 7.5.3 Contribution to practice

This study provides the practical contribution that is related to the initiatives linked to the practices and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the education system in realisation of learner integration in schools. This study contributes that emphasis should be placed on each stakeholder's responsibility and accountability to promote the importance for the

understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a school context. The study also contends that once the responsibilities and accountabilities are observed in a regular basis, therefore, the understanding and enhancing of the learner integration phenomenon is inevitable. As a researcher I was surprised at the fact that there is a paucity of literature on how to enhance learner integration in schools that previously experienced discriminatory education systems like here in South Africa under the apartheid government. That is why I found this enquiry important. My practical contribution attempts to provide the structure for the dynamic strategies that were contributed by the co-researchers of the study on how to enhance learner integration in their school.

This study provides the contribution to practice that should create essential conditions in schools to promote and support the understanding and enhancing of the learner integration phenomenon through the diverse range of perspectives and perceptions. Practically, the study insists on the circular motion of observing learner integration in a school context. Thus, the study contributes the learner integration wheel that I, as a researcher believe it will enable all the educational stakeholders to undertake self-reflection on their daily activities and practices. The analogy of a 'wheel' evokes the image of the educational stakeholders running systematically in a circle working together to support the realisation of learner integration in schools.

The study maintains that the wheel is a whole; therefore, events and people inside the wheel are interdependent and supportive of one another. This implies that it is important to consider every single unit, or aspect for the creation of the necessary conditions for the successful learner integration in schools. Figure 7.2 below presents the visual presentation of the study's contribution to practice.



**Figure 7.2: Learner integration wheel presents the contribution to practice of the study. (Figure designed by the researcher.)**

Figure 7.2 presents the visual presentation of the practical contribution of the study. The visual presentation showed that the school cannot do it on its own, rather, it needs the DOE and the school community to come together to work collaboratively towards the implementation of a successful learner integration. The visual presentation of the contribution to practice of the study shows that in order for the learner integration to be successful in the schools, the DOE, through the curriculum developers, needs to work hand-in-hand with other educational stakeholders like teachers, parents, learners and the school community. The contribution to

practice of this study suggests that the stakeholders need to work towards the successful learner integration in the educational climate by setting integrative programmes, practices and policies. Again, all the stakeholders need to maintain the positive attitudes regarding the learner integration in schools. Also, both the school and classroom activities should be grounded in the research-based approach in order to have a big picture of every activity or event that takes place in the school and classrooms.

The DOE and the curriculum developers should note that in order to have a successful learner integration in schools the curriculum needs to be flexible, and all the contents should be grounded in both the classroom and learners' real-world contexts. It is important for the curriculum modification and adaptation to take place for the effective learner integration in schools. This study also contends that the process of modifying and adapting the curriculum to cater for the learner integration issue should not be seen as a threat to the teachers and school authorities; rather it should be seen as a crucial strategy for promoting equality, democracy and social justice in the schools. As the old African proverb says "*it takes a village to raise a child*" (De Raat, 2014, p. 60), therefore, community is a crucial element in the success of learner integration in schools. For the practical contribution this study maintains that the community should work as a partner with the school.

This study confirms that the partnership between the school and the community will significantly assist the school to operate effectively in supporting necessary roles towards the successful learner integration. The study also suggests that with community involvement in the realisation of learner integration in school, this will also promote an effective parental involvement which is a crucial element for the learners' academic achievement. The visual presentation of the practical contribution stipulates that volunteerism from the people of the school community is a means towards the successful implementation of learner integration in schools. Through the cross-generational learning experiences the community leaders will be able to assist and share their experiences and skills on how to solve some learner integration challenges at school.

To end with, the visual presentation of the contribution to practice showed the school to be another element for the successful learner integration. This study confirms that it is important for the school to operate under the shared leadership model whereby the responsibilities are

divided from the top (school management) to the bottom level (learners, cleaners etc.) in the school. Likewise, for the successful learner integration this study states that the school should have both a supportive policy and a supportive leadership to work towards the implementation of learner integration.

For the successful learner integration, the school needs to operate within a culture of mutual respect, caring, kindness and support for everyone involved. This study viewed the positive attitude towards learner integration as the most important element for the successful implementation of learner integration in the school because, the positive attitudes toward learner integration will allow for and encourage practices, programmes and policies which should practically guarantee the success of learner integration. The next section explains the recommendations for future research.

## **7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

It is evident from this study that the learner integration phenomenon is linked to the personal growth and holistic development of the learners within their learning environment. Therefore, this study recommends that:

- Future studies should focus on the importance and necessity of all the events and activities that take place at schools. This implies that the research should encourage the events, activities and programmes that foster the successful implementation of learner integration in the schools. Thus, future studies should examine the school practices with regular questions like why do such events or activities exist at the school and how they promote learner integration?
- Future studies should focus on averting the existing impediments for the successful learner integration at schools. This implies that the future studies should clearly identify all the impediments and plan for the appropriate actions to mitigate their negative impacts towards the implementation of learner integration in the schools. This study maintains that the actions and events for successful learner integration need to be well outlined, planned and designed by the curriculum developers to ensure that the roles of each educational stakeholder such as school managers, teachers, other staff members,

learners, parents and community are clearly defined and how to support the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in the schools is clearly stipulated.

- Since this study exclusively explored the issue of learner integration in one selected Ex-Model C school, I recommend that future studies should research this issue in two or more contexts. For instance, future studies can explore this issue from the independent schools or township schools to have a more comprehensive understanding of the learner integration phenomenon.

## **7.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Just like any other studies, this study also has certain limitations. I trust that the future researchers will learn from these limitations to improve their studies related to the learner integration phenomenon. The limitations of this study stem from the following aspects:

### **7.7.1 The Covid-19 pandemic**

Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic most of the schools and other educational institutions were closed for a prolonged period of time. Even when the restrictions from the DOE were loosened most of the school authorities did not allow the researchers or any other person to have physical contact with their learners and staff at school. This prevented my access to several Ex-Model C schools that I tried to send my request to in an attempt to conduct the research. During this study about five school principals rejected my request to conduct research in their schools and the main reason was the possible contamination issue with the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, with this pandemic the principals and teachers at Ex-Model C schools became fully occupied with their workload as sometimes they were forced to conduct both online lessons and in-contact classroom lessons to deal with the demands of teaching and learning processes.

Consequently, it was a very difficult time for everyone that leads to the challenge of recruiting the co-researchers who were willing to be fully involved in the research process despite what they were facing from the pandemic. Therefore, I am so thankful to the principal, teachers and grade eleven learners of Therry high school for voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study.

### **7.7.2 My doctoral learning journey**

As a doctoral student with the study that was grounded in the critical ethos, the CER theory and the PAR design that employed by this study, the common factor was an emphasis on collaboration, equal participation and active roles for both the researcher and co-researchers in the research site. However, the Covid-19 pandemic coincided with my active role as the researcher and collaboration during the study was weakened. This is because during the data generation process, I was not allowed to conduct any face-to-face meetings with the co-researchers. Instead, everything was done with online Zoom meetings, Google meetings, WhatsApp call & chat). Some of critical research maintained the fact that the role of the researcher under PAR design is to meet all the co-researchers' demands to allow critical engagement in actions and activities that take place in the research process (Wessels & Wood, 2019). Consequently, due to the online model of conducting research I was required to buy internet data bundles for each co-researcher every week for them to be able to participate in the research process. This limitation gave me a difficult time and expenses that I had not planned for.

As a young scholar with the desire of accomplishing my doctoral degree in my early 30s, I found myself seeking out advice and help from time to time from my supervisor and my fellow doctoral students. Discussions with them were instructive and helped me a lot to remain on track and to cope effectively with all the changes in how to conduct the research during the pandemic. Although the pandemic knocked me down with more challenging times and unprecedented life circumstances, I did not give up on my study and I strove to stay strong mentally, spiritually and physically during my whole doctoral learning journey.

### **7.7.3 The selection of co-researchers of the study**

Another limitation of the study was the sample methods used to select the co-researchers of the study. As mentioned in Chapter Four (4.8.3) the sample size for this study was seven co-researchers that comprised a principal of the school, two grade 11 teachers and four grade 11 learners. Thus, the section goes further to explain the sample methods that were employed in the selection processes were the purposive, the convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. As a qualitative researcher this required me to engage in a critical discussion



regarding these two sampling methods to gain a deeper understanding and to make sure that I employed them in my study in proper ways.

#### **7.7.4 Research context**

The research context was a limitation in this study. Although there are more than a hundred Ex-Model C schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal province (KZN) this study was conducted in one Ex-Model C school located in Durban city in KZN which limited the transferability for the findings of the study. This was due to the lockdown restrictions that were imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the selected school location is close to where am staying and this provided a convenient and availability space to conduct the research.

#### **7.7.5 Research methodology**

This study employed the PAR design which guided the whole process of data generation through its four phases (plan, action, observe and reflect). The study employed three data generation methods, namely multi-stakeholder meetings, and photovoice and reflective writing activities. As mentioned in Chapter Four (4.9.2) multi-stakeholder meetings took place in two circles of PAR design to gain richer and denser information on the researched phenomenon and to improve the research outcomes. It was a time-consuming process as we had to schedule and reschedule our four meetings as influenced by PAR design phases.

The study employed a photovoice visual art-based method as its second data generation method. Four photovoice sessions were guided by PAR design phases as explained in Chapter Four (4.9.3). The photovoice sessions were mentally draining and stressful for the co-researchers as for most of them it was their first time to engage in the photovoice data generation method. The sessions forced them to think critically before taking any photograph and to make sure that they were able to interpret and explain them in detail during the photo interpretation and photo discussion sessions.

### **7.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The study aimed to explore the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. Co-researchers of the study managed to share their perceptions that were based on their experiences, ideas, perspectives and knowledge of the understanding of the

learner integration phenomenon by using both textual and visual data. The findings of the study showed that learner integration is a complex phenomenon that shapes not only the democracy, social justice and better academic performance at school, but also, this phenomenon linked with the whole process of personal growth and holistic development of the learners in their learning environment. It was also revealed in this study that learner integration is a crucial element for the emancipation of minority from remaining marginalised and voiceless because this phenomenon encourages fairness, democracy and equality for all involved in the school context.

With this in mind, I argue that effective learner integration could make the schools to be a better place not only for the learners but also for everyone involved in the teaching and learning process. This is because this phenomenon emphasises respect for all humankind, humbleness, love, kindness and support for one another. Finally, I am convinced that the educational stakeholders will benefit from the practical contribution that the study contributed despite its limitations. The learner integration wheel proposed by the study is emancipatory, inclusive and integrative in nature, and the wheel encourages collaborative and interactive ways of promoting successful learner integration for all educational stakeholders.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter



09 January 2023

**Theresa Joakim Kanyopa (217060160)**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear TJ Kanyopa,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00002711/2021

**Project title:** The understanding and enhancement of learner integration in Ex Model C School.

**Amended title:** Understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-model C school.

**Degree:** PhD

#### Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 06 December 2022 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project; Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully







.....  
**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/ms

#### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

**Postal Address:** Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

**Telephone:** +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 **Email:** hssrec@ukzn.ac.za **Website:** <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## Appendix B: permission letter from the Department of Education



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  
Tel: 033 3921063 / 033-3921051

Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za  
Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

**Enquiries:** Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli

**Ref.:**2/4/8/10007

Mrs TJ Kanyopa  
15 Usavolo Road  
KLOOF  
3610


Dear Mrs Kanyopa

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNER INTEGRATION IN EX MODEL C SCHOOLS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 March 2021 to 01 August 2023.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

**PINETOWN DISTRICT**

  
Dr. EY Nzama  
Head of Department: Education  
Date: 03 March 2021

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

## Appendix C: Request letter to the principal of the school



22/4/2021

The principal

Therry High School

Durban: 3208

Dear Mrs Dalila Msebi,

Ref: A request for the permission to conduct a research study in the school.

My name is Theresia Kanyopa (student number: 217060160), a PHD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of the requirements of the degree, I am required to complete a research dissertation. Therefore, I humbly request your permission to conduct a study in your school which explores the understanding and enhancing of learner integration within Ex Model C schools. Hence, the title of the study is “**The understanding and enhancing of learner integration in an Ex Model C schools**”. However, the aim of this study is to explore ways in which learner integration is understood and enhanced in Ex Model C schools. Therefore, to achieve this aim, this study will ensure that the following objectives are met: First; to explore the understanding of learner integration in an Ex Model C school. Second; to examine how does the understanding shapes the enhancement of learner integration in a certain ways, and lastly, to explore why do we need to understand and enhance learner integration in an Ex Model C school. Moreover, this research will involve a focus group discussion with you the principal of the school and two grade 11 teachers’ (male and female). In addition, it will also be conducted using a Photovoice method with four grade eleven learners (2 boys and 2 girls) from the school.

Madam, I would like to ensure you that all the participants in the school and the name of the school will be anonymised in the various publications that will result from this study. I will not

use the participants' real names or the name of the school. The participants are also free to withdraw at any time from the study during or after the data generation without penalty.

Whilst, every precaution will be taken to adhere with the COVID-19 protocols by ensuring social distancing and communicating via WhatsApp and Zoom. Also, I will maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group. Again, all the participants will be informed regarding the disclosure of their well-being been compromised or at risk, that they should inform me and I shall also seek their consent in addressing the matter.

In the event of any problems or concerns you may contact me through the contact details mentioned on this letter or my supervisor Professor DJ Hlalele on [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za) or on 0312603858. Or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows;

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

RESEACRH OFFICE, WESTVILLE CAMPUS

GOVAN MBEKI BUILDING

PRIVATE BAG X 54001

DURBAN: 4000

KWA-ZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

TEL:0312604557; FAX: 0312604609

EMAIL:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Theresia Kanyopa    Cell: 0763361273    Email: [theresiakanyopa@yahoo.com](mailto:theresiakanyopa@yahoo.com)

## Appendix D: Principal informed consent reply slip

I ..... (Full name of the principal)

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: **“The understanding and enhancing of learner integration in an Ex Model C school environment”**. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that have been explained to me and I consent that the researcher conduct research at this school. I understand that the co-researchers are at liberty to withdraw from the research process at any time should they desire

In the event of any problems or concerns I may contact the researcher through the contact details mentioned on this letter or through her supervisor Professor DJ Hlalele on [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za) or on 0312603858. Or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows;

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

RESEACRH OFFICE, WESTVILLE CAMPUS

GOVAN MBEKI BUILDING

PRIVATE BAG X 54001

DURBAN: 4000

KWA-ZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

TEL:0312604557; FAX: 0312604609

EMAIL:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Signature of Principal: ----- Date-----

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: -----Date: -----

Thanking you in advance.

## **Appendix E: Consent letter to the co-researcher**



Date: 30– 05-2021

### **Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research**

Dear Participants.

My name is Theresia Joakim Kanyopa (student number: 217060160). I am a doctoral student from University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) Edgewood campus, 121 Marian hill Road, Pinetown. My contact number is 0763361273 my e-mail address is [217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in an Ex-Model C School. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore ways in which learner integration is understood and enhanced in an Ex-Model C School. The study is expected to enroll seven participants from within the school. It will involve the following procedures: multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice sessions and reflective writing. The duration of your participation, if you choose to enroll and remain in the study, is expected to be one hour on four different days of our meetings.

The study may involve the following discomforts such as the unfolding of the schools' policies and programmes that do not seem to enhance the learner integration in the school. We hope that the study will create the following benefits to participants as the study will provide an understanding of ways that may be used to enhance the learner integration in an Ex-Model C school. Every precaution will be taken to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols by ensuring social distancing and communicating via WhatsApp and Zoom. Also, I will maintain the confidentiality of the participants in every group. All the participants will be informed should their well-being be compromised or placed at risk. Should they feel compromised they should inform me and I shall seek their consent in addressing the matter.



This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number; HSSREC/00002711/2021).

I hereby invite you to participate in multi-stakeholder meetings; photovoice sessions and a reflective writing exercise which will take approximately one hour per day at a convenient time. I would like to assure you that our meetings will be guided by the COVID 19 safety protocols, by maintaining social distance as our meetings and discussion will be done remotely/online.

Also, the discussions will be audio-taped with your permission and the data generated will be transcribed and made available to you to ensure that the correct information has been captured. All the data generated will be kept in a secure location, and destroyed after a period of five years. In order to protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms in my transcript and in my research report. If you feel uncomfortable at any time you are at liberty to stop the participation and you can withdraw from the study. Universal principles such as honesty, justice and respect will direct my research. Moreover, every precaution will be taken to maintain the confidentiality and safety of each participant in the focus group discussions that will take place online.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me through the contact details mentioned above or through my supervisor Professor Dipane Hlalele on [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za) or on 031 260 3858 or via the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

RESEACRH OFFICE, WESTVILLE CAMPUS

GOVAN MBEKI BUILDING

PRIVATE BAG X 54001

DURBAN: 4000

KWA-ZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

TEL:0312604557: FAX: 0312604609

EMAIL:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Theresia J. Kanyopa.

Theresia J. Kanyopa.

## **Appendix F: Co-researchers' informed consent reply slip**

I----- have been informed about the study entitled “**The understanding and enhancing of learner integration in an Ex Model C School**” by Theresia Joakim Kanyopa.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study is to explore ways in which learner integration is understood and enhanced in Ex Model C School.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher on 0763361273 or e-mail address [217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

PrivateBag54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additionally,

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / group discussion YES / NO

_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date

_____	_____
Signature of Witness	Date

(Where applicable)

_____	_____
Signature of Translator	Date

(Where applicable)

## Appendix G: Consent letter to learner's parents / guardians



Date: 30-05-2021

### Information Sheet and Request for the Consent for the child to Participate in Research

Dear Parent/guardian.

My name is Theresia Joakim Kanyopa (student number: 217060160). I am a doctoral student from University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) Edgewood campus, 121 Marian hill Road, Pinetown. My contact number is 0763361273 my e-mail address is [217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

Your child is being invited to participate in a study that involves research on the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in an Ex-Model C School. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore ways in which learner integration is understood and enhanced in an Ex-Model C School. The study is expected to enroll seven participants within the school. It will involve the following procedures multi-stakeholder meetings, photovoice sessions and reflective writing. The duration of the participation if you choose to enroll your child and if he or she remains in the study is expected to be one hour for four different days of our meetings.

We hope that the study will create the following benefits to participants as the study will provide an understanding of ways that may be used to enhance the learner integration in Ex-Model C schools. Every precaution will be taken to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols by ensuring social distancing and communicating via WhatsApp and Zoom. Also, I will maintain the confidentiality of the participants. All the participants will be informed should their well-being be compromised or at risk.

Participation of your child is of free will and you may withdraw him or her from the study at any time.

I promise:

- That all information regarding the participation of your child will be confidential and will not be shown to other teachers, school managers, or other learners. The only persons with access to information will be my supervisor Professor Hlalele and myself.
- That all written reports and accounts of this study will not identify the school or persons involved.
- That the information gathering process will not harm your child.
- That the information gathering process will not disrupt their teaching and learning process.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me through the contact details mentioned above or through my supervisor on [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za) or on 031 260 3858. Alternatively you can contact the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The contact details are as follows:

**Appendix F: Humanities & social sciences research ethics administration**

**Research Office, Westville Campus**

**Govan Mbeki Building**

Private Bag 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Theresia J. Kanyopa.

Theresia J. Kanyopa

## Appendix H: Parent/ guardian informed consent reply slip.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name of parent/guardian)  
of a child by the name of \_\_\_\_\_ have been approached to let my  
child participate in the research entitled: **“The understanding and enhancing of learner  
integration in an Ex-Model C School”**.

I agree ☐ / I disagree ☐ to my child participating in this research study.

I understand that: - My child's participation in the research will be of free will.

- She/ He may withdraw from the research process at any time.
- The information obtained will be used with the strictest confidentiality.
- My child's identity will not be disclosed in the thesis.
- Photographs of my child will not be used in this thesis or any display related to the research.
- Participants' rights will be respected ☐
- The research interviews will not impact negatively on my child's learning time. ☐

If you are consenting (willing for your child to take part), please indicate (by marking the appropriate block with an X) whether you are, or you are not willing to allow the interview to be audio recorded

I am willing to allow an Audio recording.    I am not willing to allow an Audio recording.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher on 0763361273 or e-mail address [217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:217060160@stu.ukzn.ac.za) or her supervisor on [hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hlaleled@ukzn.ac.za) or on 031 260 3858.

If I have any questions or concerns about my child's rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION



Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix I: Photovoice sessions schedule**

You are invited to participate in this study which explores the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools. The aim of the study is to explore the ways in which learner integration is understood and how the learner integration could be enhanced in Ex-Model C schools. The objective of this study is to explore the understanding of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools; to explore how the understanding does shape the enhancement of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools; and lastly, to examine why learner integration in ExModel C schools is enhanced in certain ways.

Introduction by the researcher

Good day everyone! My name is Theresia Kanyopa. Thank you for taking your time to participate in the photovoice sessions in relation to the study mentioned by me.

Introduction by the co-researchers

We will do a quick introduction, can each of you tell us your name, age, hobbies and best subject?

(Note to the researcher: The following question will guide the photovoice process)

**Session 1: Photovoice workshop:** This includes the photovoice process namely:

- Exploring what is photovoice?
- Examining the use of a camera: looking at the different types of cameras (digital and manual)
- Explaining the ethics involved in photovoice (Mitchell, 2011; Wang & Redwoodjones, 1999)

Session 2: Photoshooting

This session is where the participants (learners) are allowed to use their phones to take photographs that will show their understanding of learner integration.

The following questions were used as a guiding prompts:

- Use your cell phone/ camera take two (2) photographs of things that influence your understanding of learner integration.
- Explain what is on the photograph and does it play a part in influencing the understanding in your school.
- How does it work and who allowed you to use that thing in the photograph?

After the photo shooting, I will give request them to send the pictures to my email. I will open a folder on my laptop for each of my co-researchers and upload their photos inside it.

### Session 3: Photo interpretation

The co-researchers will be asked to interpret the reason they took the photographs using the following guiding prompts to give a full detail of what the photographs mean.

Using the showed questions:

- Who/what is in the photographs?
- Why did you take the photographs?
- What is in the photographs?

### Session 4: Photo discussion

In this session, the researcher will upload the photographs via Zoom and will request the co-researchers to engage in discussion regarding the photographs showing their understanding of each photograph and how it could be used to enhance learner integration in their school. The following guiding prompts will be used in the discussion:

- Can you tell me what this photograph depicts?
- How can this photographs shape the enhancement of learner integration in this school?
- What and who should be involved in shaping the enhancement of learner integration in your school? The end of the session: Thank you for your time!

## **Appendix J: Multi-stakeholder meetings schedule**

You are invited to participate in this study which explores the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools. The aim of the study is to explore the ways in which learner integration is understood and how the learner integration should be enhanced in Ex-Model C schools. The objective of this study is to explore the understanding of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools; to explore how the understanding shapes the enhancement of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools and lastly, to examine why learner integration in Ex-Model C schools is enhanced in certain ways.

Introduction by the researcher

Good day everyone! My name is Theresia Kanyopa. Thank you for taking your time to participate in this focus group discussion in relation to the study mentioned by me.

Introduction by the Participants!

I would like to know who you are and how long you have been teaching in this school.

What subject do you teach/ specialise in?

What did you study in school?

**NOTE TO THE RESEARCHER:** The following questions will guide the meeting discussion

- What is your understanding of learner integration in your school?
- What is it like to teach / study at this school? Remember you can pull from the many experiences and roles you have played in ensuring that your understanding of learner integration is shaped.
- Are there any events or things that you think can influence the understanding of learner integration? You can mentioned things or events that take place within and outside the school for example the classroom, library, sports field, shops, canteens, or even the cooperation of school and community.

Second meeting

- I would like to hear how the understanding shapes the enhancement of learner integration in an ExModel C School?
- In what ways do you think or feel that the school, if supported can enhance learners' integration?
- In what ways do you think or feel that the school can inhibit learners' integration and fail to encourage learners to learn?

### Third meeting

- At this point I would like you to describe your understanding of learner integration and explain how you think or feel that the school is enhancing learner integration in this school?
- What are the strategies used by the school to shape the enhancement of learners' integration?
- How do these strategies shape the enhancement of learner integration in their schools and their learning and development?

**Probe:** These strategies can be diverse like school programmes, policies, plans, structures, sport programmes, facilities, physical structures, psychosocial support etc.

- a. Who should be involved in enhancing these strategies in certain ways?
- b. How should these people be involved in ensuring that the learners' integration in school is enhanced?
- c. Why should these people be involved in ensuring the enhancement of learners' integration?

### Fourth meeting

- At this point, I would like you to tell me your thoughts regarding the understanding and enhancing of learner integration.

- Why is it important to understand and also to enhance learner integration in this Ex-Model C School?
- What are the advantages of understanding and enhancing of learner integration in this school?

Thank you so much for your time!

## **Appendix K: Reflective writing activity**

This reflective writing activity coincides with the PAR design which requires the co-researchers to reflect on engaging and participating in the whole research process through the multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice process that they have participated in.

Researcher:

You are given one (1) hour to reflect on your participation in today's session. I will use the following prompts: **“What have you learnt while participating in the multi-stakeholder meetings or photovoice sessions?”**

I would like you to type one page for me on your reflection regarding the whole process of your involvement in the multi-stakeholder meetings and photovoice sessions.

The following questions will be used to guide the co-researchers:

- Is there any extra photo or anything that we have not discussed that you think is relevant in relation to how learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school could be enhanced?
- Any other ways or practices that you think it could influence both the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in Ex-Model C schools?
- Write how you felt throughout the research process.
- Write about your experiences of participating in this research process.

Thank you for your time!

## Appendix L: Turnitin Report

### Turnitin Originality Report

- Processed on: 20-Apr-2022 9:28 PM CAT
- ID: 1815678773
- Word Count: 102207
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TJ KANYOPA-PHD THESIS By *Theresa Joakim Kanyopa*

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## APPENDIX M: LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATE

**iEdit**

Professional academic editing and proofreading  
Business editing and writing

iEdit  
PO Box 301  
Melville  
Johannesburg, South Africa  
2109

23 December 2022

info@iedit.co.za

### DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT

#### UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCING LEARNER INTEGRATION IN A SELECTED EX-MODEL C SCHOOL

by

**THERESIA JOAKIM KANYOPA**

I declare that I have edited and proofread this document. My involvement was restricted to language usage and spelling, completeness and consistency, referencing style, and formatting of headings, captions and tables of contents. I did no structural re-writing of the content and did not influence the academic content in any way.



Norman Baines  
BA (Hons) LLB

## **APPENDIX N: DATA GENERATION PROCEDURE AS INFLUENCED BY PAR DESIGN**

Study title: THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCING OF LEARNER INTEGRATION IN A SELECTED EX-MODEL C SCHOOL.

This study explores the understanding and enhancing of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) design will be the research design that paves the way towards the realisation of this research aim.

Therefore, to achieve this aim, this study is guided by the following objectives:

- To understand learner integration through the co-researchers' perspectives in a selected Ex-Model C school.
- To explore ways which could enhance learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.
- To examine the need and importance for understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school.

### **DATA GENERATION GRID / DATA PRODUCTION PROCEDURES UNDER PAR**

The data generation is going to be in accordance with the four phases of PAR design, namely; plan, action, observe and reflect. These four phases will play a significant role in answering the three research questions which are:

- What are the co-researchers' perspectives on understanding of learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- How learner integration could be enhanced in a selected Ex-Model C school?
- Why is it important to understanding and enhancing learner integration in a selected Ex-Model C school?

The table below shows how the PAR design guided the data generation process during this study.

PAR phase	Description	PAR Main aim (objective)	Activities/method	Research question
Planning	<p><b>1.</b> Identifying the schools' roles that are related to the research problem (learner integration).</p> <p><b>2.</b> This involves the explanation of the research and research process as well as familiarising myself with the co-researchers.</p>	<p><b>Equality:</b> - Through planning towards the action (data generation process). The participants are made to see themselves as co-researchers and also to know that there is equity in the power distribution. This will reduce the power of the researcher and increase the power of co-researchers so as to equalise their positions in the research process.</p>	<p>-Online multi stakeholder meetings and negotiations</p> <p>-Photovoice workshop</p>	<p>Research Question (RQ, thereafter)</p> <p>RQ 1</p> <p>RQ 2</p> <p>RQ 3.</p>

Action	<p><b>1.</b> This phase intends to put into practice all of the things agreed on during the planning phase.</p> <p><b>2.</b> It also involves implementing the plan whilst recognising the need for flexibility and adjustment.</p>	<p><b>Transformation:</b></p> <p>Focusing on what works, defending it, amending it and apply it in practice. The co-researchers consciousness is raised while engaging in the research process and the issues of learner integration is affirmed and this needs to be addressed in their society through their actions.</p>	<p>-Multi-stakeholder meetings</p> <p>-Photoshooting session</p>	<p>RQ 1</p> <p>RQ 2 and</p> <p>RQ 3</p>
Observe	<p><b>1.</b> Monitoring the progress of the action taken towards solving the research problem.</p> <p><b>2.</b> It is also a collaborative research synthesis, for interpreting and analysing the research methods employed in the research process.</p>	<p><b>Critical:</b> the issue of learner integration and how to enhance it will be deliberately examined in order to eliminate every existing policy that is exclusive and discriminatory.</p> <p>The researcher and co-researchers in this study will enter into dialogue and discard the created historical distortions that control practices, processes and</p>	<p>-Multi-stakeholder meetings on the potential outcomes.</p> <p>-Photo interpretation and discussion session.</p>	<p>RQ 1</p> <p>RQ 2 and</p> <p>RQ 3</p>

		programmes in Ex-Model C schools.		
Reflect	<p><b>1.</b> This phase justifies how the actions are being carried out by re-examining the actions engaged during the data generation method and refining of the plans, activities and potential action plans that are embedded in the research process revealing what should be. In this phase the co-researchers are empowered, emancipated, transformed as they learn, adjust and improvise to create ‘what will be’</p> <p><b>2.</b> This phase is also the core and the central part of the PAR design as it emphasises the explanation of power, collaboration, knowledge, ethics,</p>	<p><b>Emancipatory:</b></p> <p>Through self-reflection, the co-researchers are empowered and consciously aware of the issues related to learner integration and they are able to create knowledge that is concerned with liberating people from constraints in their social structure.</p>	Reflective writing activity	<p>RQ 1</p> <p>RQ 2 and</p> <p>RQ 3</p> <p>(Reflection on the whole research process).</p>

	emotions and co-researchers' well-being.			
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## Appendix O: Photographs from photo voice



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2



Figure 5.3



Figure 5.4



Figure 5.5



Figure 5.6



Figure 5.7



Figure 5.8



Figure 5.9





Figure 5.10



Figure 5.11



Figure 5.12



Figure 5.13



Figure 5.14

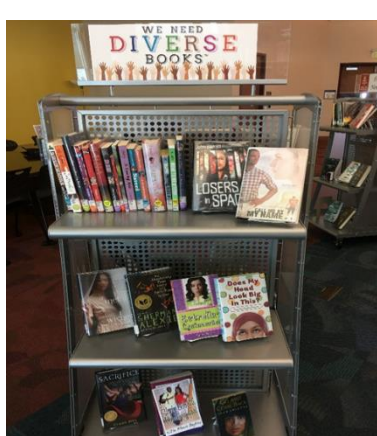


Figure 5.15

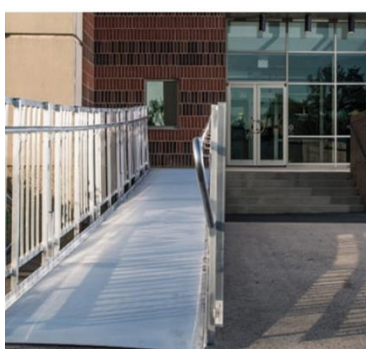


Figure 5.16



Figure 5.17



Figure 5.18





Figure 5.19



Figure 5.20