

**IN-SERVICE MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN ONE URBAN SCHOOL
DISTRICT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:
A CRITICAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Educational Administration and Leadership)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2012

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study aimed to explore teachers' in-service multicultural education and the nature of teachers' professional development in one urban school district in the province of British Columbia.

This study focused on the perspectives of five participants; four participants from the School District and one participant from the Teacher Association. All participants were involved in teachers' in-service professional development. From a critical lens and using semi-structured interviews and document analysis the study explored the participants' understanding of multiculturalism and the theoretical frameworks that may have shaped the participants' choices and actions concerning how they educate and support teachers to handle the complexities of diversity and multiculturalism within the current changing demographics of the school district.

The study revealed that despite four decades of official multicultural policy, and the abundant academic research in the field of multiculturalism, teachers' multicultural education in the school district is still limited to the "celebratory" tokenistic approach and doesn't move beyond "festivals, food and dance". It also revealed that critical discourses that link multicultural education to equity and social justice are absent and feared.

The study highlights the need to rethink teachers' in-service multicultural education from critical perspectives that embrace critical and transformative stance and that reject the fallacy of apolitical education and neutral educators.

PREFACE

This research project has been approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioral Ethics Board under certificate of approval number H10-01143.

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GLOSSARY

Professional development/in-service education

For methodological purposes and to limit the scope of the research, “professional development”, “staff development” and “in-service education” are used interchangeably because for years the only form of “professional development” available to teachers was “staff development” and “in-service training” usually consisting of workshops or short term courses that would offer teachers new information on a particular aspect of their work (Villega-Reimers, 2003).

According to the definition provided in the Provincial Collective Agreement between the School District and the Teachers’ Association, Professional development “involves the following three complementary components, each of which is valid and important. Teachers should therefore have access to the three components within a school year:

- a) Individual professional development** in which a teacher defines and pursues professional development goals related to their employment.
- b) School-based professional development** in which a group of teachers within a single school, preferably the entire staff, collectively define and pursue professional development goals collaboratively in response to their personal interests and needs, the leadership of the Professional Development Committee,

the educational leadership initiatives of the administrative officers, identified school-wide priorities, the educational initiatives of the Ministry of Education and within the educational goals and priorities of the Board.

c) District-based professional development in which teachers from more than one school participate in activities organized by district staff or district committees in response to Ministry mandates, district initiatives or the needs of teachers from more than one school " (Provincial Collective Agreement PCA 3, 2006-2011, p. 91).

Pro D is used by B.C. educators to refer to Professional development.

The focus of the study is on the district-based and the school-based professional development addressing multiculturalism (this also involves related issues such as racism, social responsibility, and diversity) provided by the district and the local Teachers Association. These terms will be analyzed and discussed in chapter four as the discussion about multiculturalism with the different participants in the study would lead to a discussion about how they perceive these concepts as they are part of the debate around Multiculturalism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank Allah for the blessings He has bestowed on me. He always provides me with the hope that brightens my life and the faith that guides my ways “Alhamdulillah”

I offer my most sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Wendy Poole, who has supported me throughout my graduate studies with her patience and knowledge. She was able to rekindle my enthusiasm when I was tempted to give up. This research study could not have been done without her constant encouragement.

I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Deirdre Kelly and Dr. Hartej Gill. Their insightful remarks and constructive feedback strengthened my study and pushed me to do my best. Their support, encouragement, and expertise were invaluable.

Special thanks go to Dr. Andre Mazawi, I learned a lot from his course and from our discussions. His knowledge, enthusiasm and dedication were inspiring.

I express my appreciation to the five participants, who despite their busy schedules, they devoted their time and were willing to participate in my research.

I very much value and cherish the sincere support of my family, my mother, my sisters and my brothers. Their love, prayers and encouraging words gave me strength and determination to pursue my academic journey. I am also grateful to my friends Leila, Faten and Nadia for their encouragement and support, especially for taking good care of my children when I was so busy with my graduate courses.

Last, but not least, I thank my husband Adel, my children Yasmine and Aymen for giving me a strong reason to never give up. They are my world.

DEDICATION

*To the most loving teacher I have ever known, my late father,
Mustafa Miled,
May Allah bless his soul.*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Description of the study

This qualitative research study examines the nature of multicultural teachers' in-service education. This is accomplished through an analysis of the professional development curriculum and the perspectives of school district staff engaged in teachers' professional development intended to address issues of multiculturalism, diversity and antiracism. This study took place in an urban school district in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, Canada. In this research I examined the conception of multicultural education presented and advocated in the school district, explored how school district professional development leaders construct meanings around multiculturalism, and examined how they educate teachers to be able to carry out their roles in a multicultural setting. The study explored whether the school district embraces a multicultural education framework that transcends the "tokenizing" approach; and whether it adopts a critical framework that engages with equity, social justice, critical pedagogy and social activism, reflecting BC Ministry of Education statement that "We turn to schools to help us enshrine language rights, to preserve diverse cultural heritages, to promote social equality and social justice" (BC Diversity Framework, 2004). This vision implies that school

districts, schools and teachers are not only responsible for their students' academic achievement, but are also committed to equity, social justice and antiracism. This responsibility requires well-informed teachers able to deal with all the complexities and challenges of racial, linguistic and cultural diversity.

In this study, I examined and analyzed school district documents related to the school district teacher professional development and in-service, observed professional development activities, and conducted open-ended semi-structured interviews with five professionals, four representing the school district and one representing the Teachers' Association. All participants are involved in teachers' in-service education. Their involvement ranges from direction setting to facilitating professional development sessions.

The concept of multiculturalism in this research is limited to the construct of culture, ethnicity and race and does not raise other important components of social identity such as gender, disability, social class and sexual orientation. I acknowledge that all these components intersect and overlap and cannot be disassociated. However, to limit and manage my research I chose to focus my attention on the area of race, ethnicity and culture as they are prominent in the discourse of Canadian multiculturalism. The definition that is quite evident in the Canadian context is that: "Multiculturalism in Canada refers exclusively to a concern with cultural diversity, thus addressing issues of immigrant integration, cultural identity, racism, religious diversity and linguistic diversity. These issues

have been part of a discussion of Canadian identity that began at the time Canada officially became a country in 1867” (Joshee et al., 2010, p. 1).

The issue of teachers’ in-service multicultural education “was not explored through one lens; but rather a variety of lenses allowed for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544), and qualitative methodology was chosen. This research is consistent with the principles of qualitative single case study research.

1.2. Researcher’s position

As a researcher, I cannot help but bring my own background and bias with me to this study; actually, my relationship with multiculturalism is quite personal. The idea of this study emanated from my positionality, my subjectivity, my “multiculturalism,” “transnationalism,” “hybridity,” and “multilingualism.” I am an “immigrant woman,” a “new Canadian,” and a member of one “visible minority” living in a world context, where “there is growing international level of cultural intolerance since 9/11, epitomized by racial profiling, an erosion of civil liberties which allows detention without trial in several ‘democratic’ countries, and visible hostility towards culturally-specific forms of dress, as evidenced by Dutch and French legislation” (Naylor, 2001, p. 228). My veil unveils my origins, religion, and cultural background and puts me in a stereotyped “cultural framework” especially after September 11, 2001. In Canada, the post-September 11 era magnified the traditional discriminatory

practices of dividing immigrants into preferred and non-preferred groups based on country of origin” (Kruger, Mulder & Korenic, 2004, p. 86). I am identified as a member of the non-preferred groups because “citizens, immigrants, and refugees of Muslim countries have been indiscriminately perceived as a security risk in the post 9/11 climate” (Gilbert, 2007, p. 25). Like all immigrants, even the second generation, who never had a home country but Canada, my “Canadianess” remains questioned and I have to answer the famous question: What nationality are you?

'Canadian.'

'No, I mean, what nationality are you really?' (Bissoondath, 1994, p. 111).

This research emerges also from my belief that teachers are at the grassroots of multicultural education and argues “that teachers make a significant difference in students’ learning, their achievement and their life chances” (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 157). Being a teacher triggered my interest in this area of research, as I believe that “teaching for democratic citizenship is a crucial aim of public schooling”(Kelly & Brandes, 2001, p. 451) and that “teachers can play an important role in nurturing a more active form of citizenship among young people” (Kelly & Brandes, 2001, p. 438). This comes from my belief (though considered cliché these days) that teachers can do miracles; they can make dreams come true; and that they can inspire and can create change. We all have memories of our best teachers and worst teachers; the criteria is not usually

who was excellent in the subject, or the expert, but we usually remember the one who was treating us with respect and dignity, who was fair and just, who was listening to us and looking at us, who was seeing our uniqueness, differences and the one who enhanced our acceptance of ourselves and our sense of belonging to our class, to our school and to our community. I get quite poetic and idealistic about teachers because I believe that they are agents of change. The movie *Freedom Writers* has made me more determined that Erin Gruel is not an exception; all teachers have an ethical responsibility to be activists for social justice causes. Growing up in a culturally homogeneous society and in a meritocratic educational system that depoliticized schools, normalized injustice and silenced issues of equity and justice, I wanted my children to be educated in a different educational system. My personal experience of immigration to Canada was mainly driven by an image of Canada, the land that promises democracy, equity and better opportunities for me and my children to experience a true sense of citizenship. However, my foreign credentials, my fifteen years of teaching ESL students and my proficiency in three languages seemed not to be considered as valid experience to be able to teach in BC. My professional ESL experience outside of Canada is not considered as valid experience to find a job within Canada. And I started my graduate journey at UBC to overcome a sense of failure and disappointment, an experience that marked my life and changed so much in me personally and academically. An academic experience filled with

curiosity, criticality, field research, discussions, and academic growth and success. An experience that showed the bright side of Canada, where I was supported and encouraged by my teachers and colleagues. During my graduate academic journey, I was interested in discovering public schools and public education, and I had the chance to conduct ethnographic research about ESL students in an elementary school. From my field observation that lasted about three months, I realized that the reality in Canadian schools is intriguing. I noticed that diversity was identified as a “problem,” and ESL students’ home language and culture were considered barriers to quick and efficient assimilation. I noticed that multiculturalism was mainly about immigrant students, and the celebration of one international day with music, food and dance attempts to prove that Canada tolerates, celebrates, and welcomes the “others.” Teachers were overwhelmed by the complexity of their classrooms, concerned about the students’ academic achievement and how to help their students adjust to the English language, the Canadian culture, (Eurocentric by default), and how to domesticate the students’ original culture. Teachers were under a lot of pressure; accountability, performativity, language issues with immigrant students, increasing number of students per class and shortage of support staff. Teachers were in need of help to cope with this situation.

This situation made me think of the role of professional development in this complex situation, especially in relation to multiculturalism and multicultural education.

I believe that teachers' responsibility within the current local and global context transcends the technicalities of teaching as "the great task confronting educators is to address the radical reconfiguration and cultural re-articulation now taking place in educational and social life" (McCarthy, et al., 2003, p. 462). This implies that it is extremely important to rethink how teachers are educated and prepared in relation to multiculturalism, diversity and anti-racism.

I need to underscore that I locate my research within the critical paradigm, critical multiculturalism, and social reconstructionism. Ultimately I resonate with a social reconstructionist multicultural approach to schooling (Grant & Sleeter, 1999) and I argue that social change is the major long-term goal of social reconstructionist multicultural education. It aims to prepare educators and students to challenge inequity, social injustice and discrimination (Grant & Sleeter, 1999,). It is an approach that places social justice as the goal of change.

1.3. Research background

Demographic statistics concerning the Canadian population in general and student population in particular show that there is a significant transformation of national demographic configurations in recent years. Canada's population in the third quarter of 2010 was driven forward by the highest

immigration rates seen in four decades, Statistics Canada says. Canada's population was estimated at 34,238,000 as of Oct. 1, 2010, an increase of 129,300 since July. The federal agency said 65 per cent of that growth came from new Canadians during the three-month period, as 84,200 immigrants arrived in the country. Statistics also show that the Greater Vancouver Area ranks second in Canada in the yearly number of landed immigrants (BC Stats, 2006).

Patterns of immigration have also shifted toward non-traditional sources such as Asia, the Caribbean, and South and Central America. “Equally significant has been the unprecedented influx of landed refugees - many of them from Third World countries - who have requested entry into Canada” (Dewing & Leman, 2006). BC Statistics (2006) reports that in 2006, about one in every four British Columbian (24.8%) was a “visible minority” representing about one million people in the province. The Chinese were the single largest visible minority group, accounting for 40 per cent of all visible minorities in the province, followed by East Asians. A high proportion of the visible minority population was of Asian ethnic origin. It is important in this context to explain that “visible minorities are defined based on the Employment Equity Act definition as persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour and include Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Japanese, Korean, other visible minorities and multiple visible minorities. Immigrant students include both first-

generation immigrant youth (those born abroad) and second-generation immigrant youth (Canadian-born 15-year-olds who had at least one immigrant parent" (Statistics Canada, 2008).

These numbers demonstrate that schools in British Columbia, and in the Lower Mainland in particular, where 90% of the province's immigrant student population is enrolled, are working with an increasingly complex diversity as the majority of their student population no longer belongs to the white, English speaking, Christian and Euro-western culture. This ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity is reflected in the increasing numbers in the ESL population, which has more than tripled since 1990. Several schools in this geographic area have a larger ESL than native English speaking student population (BC Stats, 2006). McGregor and Ungerleider (1993) confirm that "social diversity has always been a characteristic of Canadian public schooling, but in recent years, it has become one of its principal characteristics. Students attending public schools today are, on virtually any given background variable (religion, gender, social class, ethnicity, skin colour), more diverse than at any time in the past" (p. 59). For instance, in Vancouver School District (SD 39) statistics indicate that English is the home language of only 42% of students in K-12; it is also reported that there are 129 different languages in Surrey and White Rock, and one in four students attending school in the district is from a household where English is not the first language (VSB, 2009).

These statistics indicate that teachers in British Columbia are facing a real challenge in terms of students' cultural diversity. Relying on a multicultural pre-service education made of one or two elective courses on issues of multiculturalism and diversity would probably not prepare them properly to deal with this multicultural landscape. Teaching in this myriad of races, colors, languages, and cultures requires more than teachers' personal initiatives to develop their professional skills and attitudes; it requires school-wide and district-wide transformation of perspectives, policies and practice of multiculturalism. Teachers need continuous support to help them develop personally and professionally to address demographic imperatives and the swift changes and educational reforms that have inundated the educational scene.

The consensus among scholars and educators on the weak preparation in pre-service education makes in-service education a central component in transforming schools to real multicultural arenas and a major factor that would transform teachers' attitudes, beliefs and practices in a way that allows them to be teachers of all the students, not just teachers of a particular privileged group of students. In this context, in-service teacher professional development has a significant impact on how teachers understand multiculturalism, how they perceive their roles in a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural setting. It can also provide them with opportunities to deconstruct their taken-for granted

assumptions and develop a critical perspective of multiculturalism, and discover progressive, transformative ways to engage with diversity.

1.4. The Sunrise school district

My research took place in one of the largest cities of the Lower Mainland in the province of British Columbia. It is located on Canada's Pacific Coast and is part of Metro Vancouver. The population was estimated in 2008 to be 188,100 people, and in 2006, 65.1% of the population in this city is considered a “visible minority”. Visible minority population is defined for federal employment equity purposes as “persons, other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”; this percentage (65.1%) is the highest proportion of any municipality in B.C. and the second highest (after Markham, Ontario) in Canada; the predominant minority group in this city is Chinese, at 44% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Also, according to the findings of the 2001 census, this city has the largest percentage of residents who are recent immigrants (between 1991 and 2001) of all the municipalities in Canada. These demographics indicate that the Sunrise School district (Pseudonym) serves a student population consisting mostly of new immigrants and foreign-born students. A report from the school district archive (2005) states that “more than 60% of all our students are non-native speakers of English. Half of all incoming kindergarten students (Canadians and immigrants) are identified as non-native speakers of English. Immigrants, about

100 per month, continue to enter the district. Virtually every classroom in the school district has at least one ESL student, and in some classrooms the only native speaker is the classroom teacher” (SD document, 2005). The Sunrise school district is responsible for 53 schools, 11 secondary schools, and 42 elementary schools, enrolling approximately 22,500 students (SD document, 2010). The school district employs approximately 1,649 teachers and teachers-on-call. The Sunrise School District is known for its “multicultural” initiatives and has won several awards in recognition of its achievements in enhancing multiculturalism. The swift demographic changes in this school district have confronted educators with serious challenges.

1.5. Research rationale

Despite a “Canadian national culture that strives for equity, racial diversity and social justice” (Solomon, et al., 2005, p. 148), racism and institutional discrimination constitute part of the Canadian history. Residential schools, the oppression of the indigenous people, and the strategies of assimilation of immigrants into the mainstream culture are a reality in Canada (Bannerji, 1996). In fact, schools are still exhibiting serious and alarming signs of discrimination (Dei, 2005; Roman & Eyre, 1997, Lund, 2006b). Concrete examples of institutional discrimination, marginalization, increasing numbers of school dropouts among immigrant students are clear indications that Canadian multiculturalism is still struggling with issues of democracy, equity and social

justice (Jiwani, 2005). Kelly (2003) argues that “Charged with preparing young people to participate in a democracy, schools too often operate in ways that undermine that aim” (p.124). In this context, I argue that teachers play a significant role to transform schools, and consequently there is an urgent need to prepare teachers for the challenges of diversity. Teachers need more adequate preparation and support systems to meet the daily challenges of the present and the growing diversity of the student population in public schools (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to examine how one urban school district in the lower Mainland of British Columbia educates in-service teachers in issues related to multiculturalism, diversity and antiracism in order to help them not only to deal and cope with the increasing diversity in their classrooms but also to empower them to become social justice advocates and eventually create a more socially just society.

It is important to highlight that this research focuses only on teachers’ in-service education; this means that the term professional development (Pro D) in this thesis refers to the organized program offered by the school district to teachers and the school-based professional development organized by schools.

Through the use of document analysis, open-ended interviews and observation of professional development sessions, I tried, from a social reconstructionist perspective and within a critical paradigm, to explore

multicultural education offered to in-service teachers and analyze the theoretical perspectives that govern how the school district supports teachers to understand and to deal with multiculturalism and diversity. The study also aims to reflect how the staff involved in teachers' in-service professional development of this school district perceives multiculturalism and how they tend to conceptualize a professional development program that is intended to prepare teachers for the daily challenges of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity.

Teachers in British Columbia, and particularly in the Lower Mainland urban schools, are working within a global context "fundamentally characterized by objects in motion" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 230), and a local context characterized by mobility and diversity. They are challenged by the increasing complexity in their daily practice. In a survey conducted by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Naylor (2001) identified three sources of stress in teachers' work life, and the one that comes at the top is the "increasing difficulty and complexity of teaching and relating to students" (p. 7). The teachers explain that the increasing number of ESL students in their classrooms and inclusive policies are putting a lot of pressure on them especially when they lack time, resources, support, and respect. This survey showed that teachers find it hard to "manage diversity" and to deal with the complexities of their student population, and that the support they have is neither enough nor adequate. Robertson (2007) contends that "As Canada becomes more socially and economically dependent on immigration, the

need to reconcile contrasting ideas on managing diversity is becoming more urgent". Unfortunately, it seems that schools not only have been assigned the lion's share of responsibility for "managing diversity" but have been instructed to do so without voicing any reservations about the task. Nor have they been involved in developing a robust vision of what would constitute success." (p. 717) the absence of vision, clear policies, and strategies to "manage diversity" has had detrimental impact on how teachers are prepared to "work for" diversity.

Arguably, teachers are increasingly living and working within a local environment which is characterized by a "deterritorialised diversity" (Castels, 2002); this diversity presents a powerful challenge to traditional ideas of nation-state belonging and "the commonly taken-for-granted stabilities of social constructs such as 'culture,' 'identity,' 'race,' 'nation,' 'state,' and so forth" (McCarthy, *et al.*, 2003, p. 462). In the present situation, Canadian youth "with nuanced, complex, and evolving identities" need schools that "recognize the right and need for students to maintain commitments to their cultural communities, to a transnational community, and to the nation-state in which they are legal citizens" (Banks, 2008, p. 134).

Although pre-service education related to multiculturalism, diversity, and anti-racism has been under scrutiny for several decades, research shows a paucity of studies that explore in-service education and how teachers are supported in regards to multiculturalism and diversity when they are in the

field. The study I conducted is important because it is one of the rare studies that address the program of in-service professional development in relation to multiculturalism, and the perspectives of school district leaders that mandate teacher's education. This also highlights the need for more research that would shed light on the conceptualization of multiculturalism and to rethink teachers' in-service education and professional development.

1.6. Research questions

In order to explore the in-service professional development curriculum in one urban school district in B.C. and the approach that frames it, I ask the following questions:

- ❖ What is the nature of in-service professional development related to multiculturalism that is provided to teachers by the school district and the teachers' association within one urban school district in the Greater Vancouver Area?
- ❖ What meanings do the school district and teacher association staff involved in professional development/in-service education construct around multicultural education?
- ❖ What theoretical perspectives of multiculturalism are represented in the district and teacher association documents and shared by the professional development facilitators?

- ❖ What do the data suggest about the purpose(s) that undergird professional development in relation to multicultural education within the school district?

1.7. **Significance of the study**

This research aims to provide an analysis of the nature of education in issues of multiculturalism offered to teachers in one school district and aims to trigger more interest in examining and evaluating these programs and how they engage with multiculturalism. In addition, this study endeavors to create a space of “conscientization” (Freire, 1985, p. 103). It is an attempt to trigger a critical consciousness that goes beyond being aware and engages in a process of change. Freire (1970) explains that conscientization “is more than a simple *prise de conscience*” (p. 471). He explains that “there can be no conscientization of the people without a radical denunciation of the dehumanizing structures accompanied by the proclamation of a new reality to be created by man” (p. 471). It implies a commitment to make changes.

Here, one may argue that it is not an easy task to examine the complexities of multiculturalism and show how it intersects with education; however, it would be possible to engage in a problem posing approach.

This research is important in that it emphasizes the need to ask questions about teacher’s in-service professional development curriculum and how it prepares, educates, and supports teachers to address a multicultural school

context. It also emphasizes that teachers need continuous support to help them develop personally and professionally to be able to cope with the demographic imperatives and the swift changes and reforms that have inundated schools.

1.8. Limitations of the study

I assume that the study has inherent limitations. I explored the Pro D curriculum and the perceptions of the professionals involved in professional development in one specific school district. The participants interviewed presented different perspectives and had different positions within the school district. However, the number of the participants represents a limited range of perspectives. I assume that if teachers and principals were interviewed, their views would enrich the study and would highlight the issue of multicultural education in a more lucid manner. I make no claims about the generalizability of the results of the study. As a case study, this research examines only one particular context in- depth.

1.9. Organization of the study

In this introductory chapter, I have explained the nature of this study, highlighted its rationale and significance, and explained the context and the limitations. Moreover, I highlighted my positionality and how my subjectivity has triggered my academic curiosity and my theoretical conceptualization of multicultural education in teachers' professional development. The research questions frame the study and identify the focus.

Chapter two encompasses a review of pertinent studies, both historical and contemporary. The review incorporates findings on the iterations involved in the development of teacher professional development and the different conceptual frameworks that define multicultural education. It also responds to the study's specific problem statement and research questions. The literature review also provides findings for the historical development of multicultural education in Canada and highlights how multiculturalism conceptualizations impact teachers' in-service professional development.

Chapter three discusses the design of the inquiry and outlines the methodology, the instruments used to gather data and the process of the data collection. It also explains the limitations of the study and data analysis procedure.

Chapter Four discusses findings and presents the data that answer the research questions; findings are presented according to the themes that emerged and the discussion of the findings is done through the literature.

Chapter five summarizes the study and makes conclusions and recommendations for further research based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

Locating the study in Historical, Economical and Social Context: From Celebration to Interrogation

To answer the research questions and to provide a context for this study, it is important to situate it within the existing scholarly writing on this topic. This review of the literature contextualizes my study and paves the way for examining the teachers' in-service multicultural education and professional development curriculum in Sunrise school district. It is also intended to set a parameter to identify the perspectives that undergird Pro D in relation to multicultural education within the school district. The vision of British Columbia Ministry of education connects multiculturalism and diversity to social justice. This commitment requires that school districts support teachers and engage them to participate actively in the establishment of equitable school system. In "*Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework*" (2008) the BC Ministry of education states under the subtitle *Staff Development/In-service* that:

The diversity of our society has increased the need for an understanding of diversity and human rights in the workplace. Boards of education, as employers, can support inclusive school cultures by helping employees develop effective educational and operational practices to address increasing diversity in school communities.

- How do school leaders foster staff development of administrators, teachers and support staff in order to respond effectively to an increasingly diverse school community? Is in-service training on diversity-related topics provided for all employees?
- How are teachers encouraged to teach about human rights and citizenship, and to model human rights and citizenship in their school operational and teaching practices? How are teachers supported in learning how to do this? (p. 26)

As it is outlined in the B.C Ministry's Framework, staff development in general and teacher in-service education has guiding principles that embrace human rights and social justice.

In this study, I am particularly interested in how the Sunrise School district conceptualizes multicultural professional development and how this perspective shapes teachers' conceptions of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. I argue that teachers' in-service education has an impact on teachers' attitudes, beliefs and pedagogies, and this impacts their students' sense of belonging to the school system and their sense of citizenship. I assume that one can examine the conception(s) explicit and implicit in a school district's or teacher association's approach by examining the curriculum they use in professional development and by interviewing those who provide Professional

Development for teachers in the district. I argue that identities, experiences and ideology are not neutral, and they cannot be disconnected from the decision making process in education (McLaren, 2003). I contend that teacher education is not ideologically and politically neutral and if we want to thoroughly examine teachers' in-service education, we have to deal with complex questions about the role of education in a modern liberal democracy and the political implications of the different conceptualizations of multicultural education.

This review will present the salient literature that focuses on teachers' in-service education in the current local and global context, which highlights the connections between in-service multicultural education and the ideological and political climate in which it occurred. In line with Carr and Hartnett (1996), I argue that any educational system has political ideas and underlying philosophical principles that shape how it educates its teachers; this means that in-service education cannot be discussed without a closer look at the social, political and ideological context of the present era characterized by globalization and neo-liberalism. Additionally the review of the literature will present a thorough analysis of the different conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education that underpin the structure and the content of teachers' in-service multicultural education.

Understanding the different conceptual frameworks is necessary to analyze the documents and the interviews and engage in a thorough analysis of

the School District staff perceptions and conceptualization of multicultural education.

2.1. Teachers' in-service multicultural education: The black box

It is important to highlight that most of the existing literature that addresses teacher preparation for a multicultural setting and ethnic diversity focuses mainly on multicultural education in teacher pre-service education. Since the 1980s, a considerable body of literature has emerged on multicultural education, particularly on how teachers should be prepared for increasing diversity in their classrooms. A plethora of models and conceptualizations framed teachers' pre-service education (see Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995; Merryfield, 1991; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 1992). An abundant body of literature that actually examined pre-service programs and courses tried to scrutinize the issue of multicultural education, such as the study conducted by Gorski (2008), where he presented an analysis of Multicultural Teacher Education courses. The major finding was "that most of the courses described within these syllabi appeared crafted to prepare teachers with cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and multicultural competence. Most of the courses were not designed to prepare teachers to identify or eliminate racial, socioeconomic, or other inequities, or to create equitable learning environments. In fact, only about a quarter of them (26.7%) appeared to be designed to prepare teachers in ways consistent with the defining principles of multicultural education. In other

words, most of the syllabi analyzed for this study failed to frame multicultural education as a political movement concerned with social justice, as an approach for comprehensive reform, as a critical analysis of power and privilege, or as a process for eliminating educational inequities" (p. 17). Contrary to the attention paid to pre-service education, "surprisingly little has been published about what is actually done" (Sleeter, 1992, p. 34). Connelly and Clandinin (2004) argue that "though teacher education occurring after pre-service preparation is crucial to the quality of the teaching force, it is more varied and difficult to define than pre-service teacher education" (p. 39). In an extensive review Knight and Wiseman (2005) confirm Sleeter's statement and explain that the situation of teachers' professional development in multicultural education is still "a black box in most studies" (p. 400) and that this area of research is neglected. Their study demonstrates that little systematic research has dealt with the issue of how teachers' in-service professional development programs educate teachers for a multicultural context. They also state that "very few empirical studies were published in this area. The majority was descriptive, anecdotal, or theoretical/conceptual" (p. 396).

Teachers' in-service education programs are rarely documented and analyzed. There is limited published research on the reality and the current trends in in-service teachers' education (Knight & Wiseman, 2005; Sleeter, 1992). Scholarship in this area shows a paucity of observation and assessment studies

and also shows that programs of in-service education have been examined most of the time from the teachers' perspectives. Available studies focus essentially on how teachers evaluate these programs (See Borko, 2004; Desimore, 2009). There is also a paucity of studies that examine school district leaders' perspectives and how their attitudes impact these programs.

2.2. In-service multicultural education in a neoliberal context

Nieto (2000) draws our attention to the fact that teachers are prepared "for the classrooms of half a century ago" (p. 181). The traditional, structural functionalist paradigm ignores the present challenges of a "growing cultural and linguistic diversity, international communication, and a tremendous access to information. It is also an age characterized by enormous inequities and a lack of democratic opportunities for many people" (p. 181). These challenges have been intensified with neoliberalism and a dominant market discourse. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) explain how educational policies have embraced the neoliberal ideology and converged with economic aims, "neoliberalism has steered education policy priorities towards a particular curriculum architecture with an emphasis on the skills and dispositions needed for participation in the global knowledge economy, modes of governance that have highlighted the principles of privatization and choice, and an audit culture that stresses performance contracts and various national and international regimes of testing and accountability, which have thinned out the purposes, pedagogies and potential

of education" (p. 197). This commodification of education has had a detrimental impact on multicultural education with all its stakeholders and particularly on teachers. Gilbert (2007) explains how neoliberalism has impacted multiculturalism; he argues that "perceptions of multiculturalism changed in the last two decades, quietly transforming from a predominantly inclusionary language to a commodification debate emphasizing competition, individual responsibility, and contribution" (p. 13).

The focus on preparing teachers for a "technical" profession has overshadowed all other concerns and dominated teachers' professional lives. Teachers are expected to be effective, performative, competitive and compliant with the organization's goals and policies. The mastery of pedagogical techniques and the transmission of knowledge instrumental to the existing society is the most important concern (Giroux, 1988). In Freire's words schools are run by a "banking" concept, which means that students are perceived as "containers," or "receptacles" to be "filled" by the teacher. "The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are" (Freire, 2000, p. 72). This dominant pragmatic "individualistic and meritocratic view of education" (Solomon, et al., 2005, p. 160) trains teachers to be state employees, who are supposed to suppress their subjectivities and ignore the cultural, social and political dynamics that contours their profession. Teachers

are expected to adopt a neutral, depoliticized attitude that would not question, rethink or resist the status-quo. Angus (1993) explains that “it is assumed that educational problems can be fixed by technical means and inequality can be managed within the walls of schools and classrooms provided that teachers and pupils follow ‘correct’ effective school procedures” (Angus, 1993, p. 343). This supremacy of the technical, pragmatic view of schools has impacted teachers’ in-service education.

Sleeter (2008) confirms that “teacher education and similarly teachers’ ongoing professional development now finds itself under assault in the context of neoliberal pressures on education and society more broadly” (p. 1951); she explains that multicultural education is shifting away from its original foundations. Sleeter (2008) states that teacher preparation for diversity is shifting “(1) away from explicit multicultural, equity-oriented teacher preparation, and toward preparing teachers as technicians to implement measures school districts are taking to raise student test scores; (2) away from defining teacher quality in terms of professional knowledge, and toward defining it in terms of testable content knowledge” (p. 1952). The neoliberal ideology, founded in the principles of privatization, marketization, deregulation, competition, efficiency, productivity, accountability, consumerism and entrepreneurship tends to privilege individualism over community, instrumental reason over ethics, and private ownership over common wealth” (Smyth, et al., 2000). These principles,

according to Bottery (2006), “steer the policies of nation states which directly impact their educational institutions” (p. 6). Within this framework that perceives education from cost efficiency, profit, and vocational perspectives, educational leaders are reduced to managers, educators to technicians, students and parents to consumers and education to training. Sleeter (2008) contends that “the shift toward technical training reinforces an ideological shift away from education as preparation for democratic participation, firmly nailing down education as work preparation” (p. 1952). The instrumental aim of education presented by the technical-rational paradigm has failed to keep its promise and has failed to deal with the challenges of a plural society.

Within a neoliberal educational setting, in-service multicultural education is viewed as costly, irrelevant and time consuming because teachers within this framework are technicians who have to master only the skills needed and required to train the future labor force for a fierce competitive labor market (Apple, 1999). This neoliberal pragmatism has dominated educational policies, practices and discourses. Gorski (2008) warns that “one of the most dangerous dimensions of prevailing educational hegemony in the [U.S] and, increasingly across the western world, is a culture of pragmatism. Exacerbated by a flood of education policy that requires assessment of student, teacher, and administrator performance on the basis of standardized test scores, the culture of pragmatism dissuades deeply theoretical or philosophical discourses among educators in

favor of discourses focused on immediate, practical strategies and resources” (p. 521).

From the studies that focused on in-service multicultural education, we can recognize common features. There is a consensus that in-service multicultural education is based on short, single-shot, underfunded, and crisis-oriented projects (Sleeter, 1996; Solomon, 1996). In a study conducted in Canada, Solomon (1995) states that “Teachers in this Canadian study found in-service programs to be inadequate, ineffective and spotty, with many becoming known as one day, one shot P.D.” (p. 256). These programs have been framed from a traditional, skill-development model characterized by part-day or day-long workshops sponsored by the school district; and facilitated by “outside experts with little knowledge of local conditions who present irrelevant, sometimes amusing, often boring prepackaged information” (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 174). In fact, scholars argue that teachers’ in-service education or professional development programs do not focus on the real challenges of diversity because “most of the in-service or staff development activities that teachers are now offered are of a more formal nature; disconnected from classroom life; and often a mélange of abstract ideas with little attention paid to ongoing support for continuous learning and changed practices” (Lieberman 1996, p. 187).

School districts and schools offer multicultural education consisting of short-term programs and supplemental curricular material designed to cause

attitudinal changes in individual students and teachers (Lund, 2006b). This highlights that most professional development programs for multicultural education focus on the individual teacher as the unit of change “rather than the school as an organization” (Sleeter, 1992, p. 141). This implies that in-service education programs tried to change teachers’ personal beliefs and perceptions without changing contexts. Transforming teachers’ perceptions of multiculturalism and cultural diversity would not succeed without the support of the whole educational system. Several studies (see Kelly & Brandes, 2001, 2010) show that activist teachers who see their role from a social justice perspective and advocate equitable school systems are not usually supported. The lack of major reforms to change the structures, the policies and the organizational culture limited the success of professional development programs (Darling-Hammond & Mc Laughlin, 1995; Jenks et al., 2001) and deepened the gap between what teachers are taught and the day-to-day challenges of their classrooms. Vilegas-Reimers (2003) argues that the situation has not changed despite the reforms that have characterized education in the last ten years, since “in most parts of the world, the majority of in-service programs are too short, too unrelated to the needs of teachers, and too ineffective” (p. 63). In a more recent study Borko (2004) also contends that, “Despite recognition of its importance, the professional development currently available to teachers is woefully inadequate” (p. 3). In-service education and formal professional development remain

fragmented and intellectually superficial (Borko, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Villegas-Riemers, 2003).

In this context critical scholars agree that in-service education should be transformed (Banks, et al., 2001; Gill & Chalmers, 2007; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Sleeter & Grant, 1998). This transformation requires a transformation on the different levels of teacher education, pre-service and in-service. The school district leaders, teachers' educators and teachers' associations are key players in the change. Attempts to revolutionize multicultural education and to rethink teachers' professional development have emerged in several countries characterized by their ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. These attempts are inspired by critical theory, critical pedagogy and social reconstructionism. A new discourse that links multicultural education to social justice, human rights and citizenship have shaped the official education policies, the official documents and the official discourse. However, several scholars who examined multicultural education, especially in the United States and Canada, have concluded that both pre-service and in-service teacher education and preparation for diverse student populations is not adequate or sufficient (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Solomon, 1996). Research also emphasizes that this weak preparation is even clearer in in-service education. Tedick (2009) posits that very little is known about how teachers approach issues of diversity in their own classrooms or

whether teachers have a clear understanding of what multiculturalism really means.

Hence, the literature demonstrates that teachers' in-service multicultural education shows that professional development programs remained traditional, framed by "a limited, technical-rationalist, and institutionally focused professional" (Bottery & Wright, 2000, p. 29). Furthermore, research findings explain that despite the rhetoric of a deep commitment to multiculturalism, social justice, equity, antiracism and inclusion, the current situation of Canadian schools in general and BC schools in particular shows that "there is mounting evidence that this policy is reflected more in documents than in reality" (Naylor, 2005, p. 25). The challenges of diversity have put a lot of pressure on teachers, and in-service education is still unable to help them move beyond the superficial celebration of difference. Most of the work done with teachers, then, is based on "hit and run" programs to raise their awareness, reduce prejudice, develop their "tolerance" skills, and inform them about how to appreciate the "other," an approach criticized by critical scholars as obsessing over culture and cultural differences (McLaren, 1997). This "tokenistic" approach is a result of how teachers, administrators, school district leaders, and stake holders conceptualize diversity and multiculturalism. Understanding how teachers are educated for a multicultural school setting requires an understanding of the different conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Deciding

“what” and “how” teachers are informed and educated to connect with their students is not a neutral decision; it is a result of a particular conceptualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education and a choice of a particular approach.

Situating my research in an urban school district in the province of British Columbia in Western Canada, has required my paying close attention to Canadian discourses around multicultural education and the different paradigms that have shaped teacher education in general and in-service education in particular. It is important to highlight that despite the different historical, political, social contexts of Canada and other immigration countries, the literature reveals that a noticeable cross-fertilization of theoretical frameworks has developed in these countries, both in their implications for multicultural education practices and the critique of these practices (Kirova, 2008).

2.3. Multicultural education in Canada: Historical overview

Multicultural education in Canada emerged as a response to cultural pluralism in society (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). Canada’s increasing ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity triggered a national multiculturalism policy, officially declared in 1971. This policy was enhanced by the 1982 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the 1984 *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*.

In Canada, there is a close relationship between immigration patterns, immigration policies and multicultural policies. Because of the “Canadian” peculiar immigration history and education, multicultural education as a response to cultural pluralism “differ significantly from those of other immigrant-receiving countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and France, among others” (Lund, 2003 cited in Kirova, 2008). In a review of public education and multicultural policy in Canada, Ghosh (2004) explains, “Canada has the distinction of being the only Western country with no federal office of education and no national educational policy” (p. 545). Kymlicka (2003) contends: “Canada is distinctive in the extent to which we have not only legislated, but also *constitutionalized*, our practices of accommodation. Our commitment to multiculturalism is enshrined not only in statutory legislation, but also in section 27 of the Constitution. No other western country has constitutionalized multiculturalism” (p. 3). Despite the national consensus on the Canadian multicultural reality, Ghosh (2004) explains that because in Canada, education is a provincial responsibility, multiculturalism as a federal policy is interpreted differently by the provincial educational authorities and is translated into varying forms of educational policies. There is great variation among the provinces in terms of the educational multicultural education program on offer.

Carrington and Bonnett (1997) show that despite the policies and a general commitment to ethnic and race equality, responses at the provincial level have been varied, and developments in practice have been uneven. When comparing race equity education in Ontario and British Columbia, they observed that it is clear that varied responses to multiculturalism at the provincial level resulted in uneven developments in praxis. They argue that the “British Columbia Government in this field appears to be minimalist and anachronistic in tenor. The latter's emphasis on cultural respect and celebration would appear to evoke an almost assimilationist image of the Canadian nation (Carrington & Bonnet, 1997, p. 414).

Moodley (1995), Joshee (2004), Solomon (1996), and other multiculturalists have documented shifts in educational policy and practice related to ethnic diversity over the years, from an emphasis on assimilation, to more contemporary efforts to promote understanding of, and respect for, diversity. In a review of multicultural discourses in Canada, Asanova (2008) argues that in Canada accommodating racial, ethnic, and linguistic difference witnessed three major trends. The first trend was an *assimilationist* approach “embedded in the belief that “the best chance for success for aboriginal people was to learn English and adopt Christianity and *Canadian* customs. Second, a *multicultural* approach that “introduced cultural celebrations” (Harper, 1997). Third, an *anti-racist approach*, defined as “action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to

address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression" (Dei, 1996, p. 25). Ghosh and Abdi (2004) argue that despite the good intentions of the federal policy of multiculturalism and the aspiration to make Canada a just society, "the implementation of this policy in education in English-speaking Canada has been far from satisfactory" (p. 543).

Multicultural education scholarship in Canada has witnessed a shift since the 1980s in the discourses and increased focus on the relationship between education and social justice. Different terminologies emerged, but it is noticeable that as Sleeter and Bernal (2004) noted, in Canada, "a fair amount of literature in antiracist and multicultural education is virtually interchangeable" (p. 252).

Multicultural education in Canada can't be understood without understanding the different conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education that have existed since the 1970's.

2.4. Multicultural education: "From celebrating difference to interrogating power" (Asanova, 2008)

The debate around multicultural education in Canada has been inspired and enriched by the same debate in the United States and Britain. In his comparative survey on multicultural education in Canada, Britain and the United States, Lund (2006a) contends that the debate, research and theorizing in multicultural education is informed by American conceptions of multicultural education and British formulations of antiracism.

Because “multiculturalism” is a term without a fixed set of meanings” (Bruch et al., 2004, p. 12), several major perspectives or approaches have evolved over recent decades. From the plethora of terminology and definitions and the abundant work of multicultural education scholars, two major approaches and perspectives of multicultural education can be recognized; the celebratory approach versus the critical and transformative approach. It is important to emphasize that “each of these approaches relies on different assumptions about the purpose of education in a multicultural and democratic society. They also each inspire very different curricula, pedagogy, and educational policies” (Castagno, 2009, p. 48).

2.4.1. Celebratory multiculturalism

This approach “positions cultural diversity as positive and healthy variety to be respected and celebrated” (Bruch et al., 2004, p. 13). It recognizes pluralism and engages in “its celebration of differences.”

According to Banks (1994), this celebratory approach comes from a “liberal” perspective that focuses on the acceptance of cultural pluralism and celebration of difference. In this context, pluralism should be lived in a harmonious intercultural understanding, within this celebratory perspective “issues of cultural diversity are reduced to points of ‘cultural enrichment’ that can be extolled without upsetting the power of dominant groups” (Kincheloe &

Steinberg, 1997, p. 17). This approach is “color-blind, class-blind, and gender-blind” (Orlowski, 2008, p. 114).

This approach is conceptually related to the original federal policy; it recognizes Canada’s cultural pluralism and promotes ethno-cultural retention (e.g., Kehoe & Mansfield, 1994; Ungerleider, 1996), and tries to “foster appreciation of the cultural heritages of others toward increasing intergroup harmony” (Lund, 2006a, p. 39). It is referred to as “celebratory” and “tokenistic.” McCreary (2009) analyzes how this paradigm has impacted education in Canada, explaining that

In their efforts to recognize diversity, schools have amended their calendars, adding Black History and Asian Heritage Month. But adorning the walls with displays of ethnic art and bringing cultural performers into school assemblies do nothing to help teachers and students interrogate systems of racial power. Inserting ethnic heroes and holidays into a Eurocentric curriculum fails to disrupt the normative whiteness of Canadian settler society (p. 45).

This “celebratory” Canadian multiculturalism “received extensive criticisms for its superficial forms and for ignoring how power and status relations operating in the wider society relate to school practices and educational outcomes” (Asanova, 2008, p. 72). Brotz (1980) criticized this paradigm and states that it is “projecting the ideal of Canada as some kind of ethnic zoo” (p. 40). He

explains that this approach that focuses on cultural difference and relies on a carnival style show of ethnic diversity makes “the whole problem of a civic education, which would bind the various ethnic groups together as Canadians, disappears from view” (p. 44).

Critical educators and scholars, like Sleeter, McLaren, Grant, Solomon, Dei, Nieto, and Banks reveal that the traditional “celebratory approach” has failed to meet the challenges of inequality, racism and oppression perspective (McLaren, 1997).

Canada’s multicultural approach has been criticized for its superficial forms and its failure to address issues of power, privilege and racial difference (see Dei, 2005). Brotz’s critique is echoed in more recent literature known as critical and anti-racist approach. In fact, several critical scholars in Canada (Dei, 1996; Ghosh, 1996; Kelly, 2001; Moodley, 1995; Solomon, 1996) argue that the celebratory, liberal approach supports dominant hegemony, silences issues of inequality and how power and privilege are distributed “disregarding hidden forms of oppression” (Lund, 2006a, p. 39).

The pluralist multicultural perspective calls for teachers and students to develop a “multicultural literacy” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997) and “cultural understanding” (Gibson, 1976). Sleeter and Grant (1998) call this celebratory approach the “*human relations*” approach and argue that it adopts a “tourist curriculum” that serves the status-quo, and valorizes the concept of difference,

“but always from the position of whiteness, that constructs non-whiteness as lesser, deviant and pathological” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 18). Banks (1994) calls the celebratory approach “the contribution approach”; this approach limits culture to food, clothing, folk tales and never problematizes the Eurocentric gaze and never examines the hidden inequities.

This approach has been a dominant conceptual framework that has shaped education policies in Canada and has framed the organizational culture of the Canadian schools for almost half a century. Pre-service and in-service teachers preparation for diverse and multicultural classroom has been predominantly shaped from a tokenistic perspective that “encourages teachers to continue to function within a Eurocentric framework” (Goodwin, 1997, p. 9).

2.4.2. Critical and transformative multiculturalism

Critical multiculturalism is grounded in the theoretical tradition of “critical theory”; it is concerned with issues of justice and social change in relationship to schooling (Banks, 2008; Giroux, 1988, 1985; Kelly & Brands, 2001, 2010; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1997, 1995a; Sleeter, 2008, 1996).

Critical scholars and educators contend that traditional multicultural programs fail to name and address racism and other discrimination, implicitly support assimilation to a mainstream, and may actually foster ethnic stereotyping by treating cultures as static and foreign (Dei, 1996).

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) and McLaren (1995) argue that “critical” - called also “resistance multiculturalism” - is grounded in a transformative political agenda that recognizes the importance of social critique and embraces a commitment to social justice. Lewis (2001) explains that “critical multiculturalism then involves not only the examination of school practices, but of school outcomes including issues of student access to the academic curriculum. In this way the goal is not merely, or primarily, about fostering appreciation of diversity, but of ensuring equal access to the kind of education that translates into access to real opportunities” (p. 803).

In Canada this critical approach has influenced the debate around multicultural education and shifted the debate from multicultural approaches to antiracist approach. In his definition of antiracist education, Dei (2005) contends that integrative anti-racism discursive framework acknowledges the reality of racism in society and the potential for educational change. The call to transform teacher education (pre-service and in-service) in Canada and to go beyond the celebratory multiculturalism and to embrace an anti-racist approach was advocated by Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1994); they confirm that an anti-racist approach would confront teachers with their biases, and move them from their comfort zone and harmonious world view and link teacher education to social action. That is, to develop a consciousness among teachers that goes beyond a

neutral color-blind framework to a more politically informed orientation (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994, p. 353).

It is important to underscore that critical/transformational multiculturalism has informed anti-racist education in Canada. Both stand on a shared vision that recognizes that race and social difference constitute struggle for power and rejection of domination in schools and society. The transformational approach to multicultural education is “primarily critical in its emphasis on an examination of underlying cultural assumptions, its study of diversity in relation to the dominant culture, and its democratic goal of educating for equity and justice. Students learn to be reflective, to adopt different perspectives, and to understand how what they are taught – the knowledge that schooling offers – has been shaped historically, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. In its concern for dealing seriously with issues of injustice and inequality, rather than merely giving them lip service” (Jenks, et al., 2001, p. 97)

Several critical theorists developed a framework that would transform teacher preparation for diversity (see Banks, 1999; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). This framework is embedded in a belief that “diversity involves the profound transformation of people and of the worldviews and assumptions that they have carried with them for their entire lives” (Melnick & Zeichner, 1997, p. 33).

The literature has provided different perspectives and theoretical frameworks of how multiculturalism can be critical and transformative in school practice. These approaches emerged as a synthesis of critical theory, critical pedagogy and social reconstructionism. Several scholars, educators, and practitioners in the field of multicultural education and teacher education have suggested conceptual frameworks that would go beyond the liberal tokenistic approach to embrace a critical, transformative stance, and they have developed a vision and strategies on how to implement teacher education and professional development that support teacher commitment to social justice. In learning how to teach a diverse student population, several paradigms prevail in teacher education (Zeichner, 1991).

Of all the paradigms, social reconstructionism is explicit in its multicultural and social justice relevance. As Zeichner (1996) put it, “[a] social reconstructionist tradition emphasizes teachers’ abilities to see the social and political implications of their actions and to assess their actions and the social contexts in which they are carried out, for their contribution to greater equality, justice, and humane conditions in schooling and society” (p. 4).

It is important to notice that the critical and transformative perspective identifies multicultural education as “a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the

pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes the democratic principles of social justice (Nieto, 1996, p. 307).

Nieto's definition of multicultural education is founded on well-identified criteria that she summarizes in the following seven basic characteristics:

"Multicultural education is *antiracist education*.

Multicultural education is *basic education*.

Multicultural education is *important for all students*.

Multicultural education is *pervasive*.

Multicultural education is *education for social justice*.

Multicultural education is a *process*.

Multicultural education is *critical pedagogy*." (Nieto, 1996, p. 308)

This implies that the transformation of schools depends on the transformation of teachers into "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988) who engage in "emancipatory pedagogy" (Gordon, 1985) and see their work in

relation to social justice. Teachers change when “awareness and knowledge acquisition need to be thought of as more than background for, or follow up to, skill development” (Sleeter, 1992, p. 40).

Scholars who examined multicultural education in countries such as the United States, Britain and Canada (see Banks & Banks , 2009; Dei, 2000; Gay, 2000; Giroux & McLaren, 1998; McCarthy, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 1996; Solomon, 1996) challenge the dominant celebratory approach of multiculturalism because, contrary to its “good intentions,” it has failed to question the status-quo, interrogate power, and does not adopt a view of multicultural education that supports a transformative vision of society (Banks, 2009; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Hodgkinson, 2002; Nieto, 2000; Rezai-Rashti, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1998; Solomon, 1996) or even cope with the pressures of the changing demographics (Cochran-Smith, 2003, 2004; Nieto, 2003; Zeichner, 1996).

2.5. Critical /transformative multiculturalism view of the purpose of education and the role of teachers

Critical theorists consider schools as “democratic public spheres” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). To them, schools are sites of empowerment and transformation. “Schools as democratic public spheres are constructed around forms of critical inquiry that dignify meaningful dialogue and human agency” (Giroux, 1988, p. 192). The perception of teachers as more than mindless technicians and “bank-clerk educators” (Freire, 2000) has been a central issue in

educational debates since John Dewey's (1916/1966) idealistic assertion that "it is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them" (pp. 119-120), and was a major concern in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000 [1970]). Teaching is associated with transformation and liberation and teachers are critical thinkers and triggers of change. Paulo Freire (2000) explains, "Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (p. 81).

The salient literature in preparing teachers for diversity that advocates critical, transformative multiculturalism argues that "multicultural education needs to be accompanied by a deep commitment to social justice and equal access to resources. Multicultural education needs, in short, to be about much more than ethnic tidbits and cultural sensitivity" (Nieto, 2003, p. 6). Zine (2003) adds that critical approaches advocate for a "multicentric" approach where marginalized knowledges, histories, and experiences are not simply an "add-on" to an otherwise Eurocentric curriculum, but rather are part of a plural center where multiple ways of knowing and making sense of the world are the basis for teaching and learning.

As teachers are in the forefront, critical scholarship recommends teachers should be educated to be active participants and a determining force in the educational setting. Banks (2009), Cochran-Smith (2004), Giroux (1985,1986, 1988), Grant (1994, 2004), Nieto (1996, 2000), Sleeter (1992, 1996, 2008), and Solomon (1996) advocate that teachers understand and perceive their work in relation to politics, power and culture and adopt a critical stance. Teachers are in fact critical educators who draw from their own personal biographies, struggles, and attempts to understand their own contradiction in the context of the contradictions of schooling and capitalism (Torres, 1998). This view of teachers' role rejects the fallacy of the objective, neutral, de-politicized teaching (Gorski, 2006). It advocates that teaching for democracy, social justice and equity requires, on one hand, teachers' awareness of their position, ideologies, capital, culture, identity and their subjectivity and, on the other hand, their commitment to seek an understanding of how power is exerted and negotiated inside and outside their school organization.

Giroux (1988) focuses on democracy as a framework that guides teachers and educators and empowers them to “develop counter hegemonic pedagogies that not only empower students by giving them the knowledge and social skills they will need to be able to function in the larger society as critical agents, but also educates them for transformative action.” That means educating them to take risks, to struggle for institutional change, and to fight both against

oppression and for democracy outside of schools in other oppositional public spheres and the wider social arena”(p. xxxiii). This means that teachers’ intellectual, critical and political awareness are significantly important in how teachers make sense of their role in a plural society. This framework requires that teachers understand, interrogate, resist and confront the ideologies that shape their identities and control their profession. Furthermore, it highlights that teachers’ success in a multicultural setting doesn’t only depend on how they unpack the hidden power dynamics, covert and overt manifestations of racism, discrimination and oppression and how they interrogate the proposed policies, but also on their power to create real transformation and trigger real change (Gill & Chalmers, 2007).

Teachers’ role in a “mosaic” of races, cultures, languages, classes, and identities should transcend the technicalities of the daily routine; it requires both a critical perspective of multiculturalism and a form of social activism (Banks, 1996; Kelly, 2003; Nieto, 1992; 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). The leading scholars of multicultural education find it necessary that moving beyond the liberal and tokenistic approach of multiculturalism requires that teachers’ multicultural practices should surpass the superficial meaning of culture as “food, dance, holidays” and “take risks” to “deconstruct the scaffoldings that maintain the undemocratic structures” (Gay 1994, p. 73), question the taken-for-granted assumptions, and adopt transformative practices to trigger a real change (Banks,

2009). Banks (1993) focuses on social activism as a core value in multicultural education; he argues that “multicultural education views citizen action to improve society as an integral part of education in a democracy; it links knowledge, values, empowerment, and action” (p. 2). To develop this critical stance and social activism Sleeter (1996) argues that, “multicultural education should also direct our attention to concentrations of power and wealth in the hands of a small elite” (p. 137). This implies that teachers need to develop an understanding of power relations in a larger societal and global context. This approach doesn’t see inequality in schools from the lens of “culture” and cultural differences, but it sees everything through a “sociopolitical context of schooling” (Nieto, 2000, p. 148). Gill and Chalmers (2006) state that the aim behind teachers multicultural education is to “create teachers who recognize systemic exclusion, power and privilege, and who develop teaching strategies and social activism projects to redress societal inequities; who develop decolonizing curriculum that is not ahistorical or apolitical and that challenges Eurocentricism, modernism and systemic oppression; who are aware that silence condones such issues; and who are able to challenge students’ and colleagues’ assumptions about those who are marginalized, and begin to increase their understanding of multiple and silenced perspectives” (p. 554).

In order to implement transformative multicultural education, fundamental changes will need to be made in the conception, organization and

execution of the educational process. "These changes require modifications in an educational system that has been governed with a monocultural orientation based on Eurocentric, middle class cultural norms. Thus, multiculturalism requires simultaneous changes on multiple levels of schooling. These changes must be deliberate, long range, ongoing and, most important, comprehensive" (Gay, 1994, p. 4-5). An important requirement in this process of change is to transform teachers' in-service education. In order to transcend their conservative conceptualizations of multiculturalism and move toward more progressive stance, Solomon (1996) argues that "teachers are challenged to explore the following possibilities: movement beyond tokenistic celebratory cultural practices to a deeper level of cultural literacy; movement from the institutional marginalization of minority cultural knowledge forms to curriculum centrality; and the development of an understanding that movement from ethnocultural injustices to social justice will be conflictual and disharmonious" (p. 72). These challenges cannot be surmounted with teachers' personal initiatives or a few courses in their pre-service education because "multicultural teacher education courses can plant the seeds for personal and professional transformation. But teachers need to be supported beyond any given course in implementing, reflecting on, and revising their practices" (Jennings & Smith, 2002, p. 457). Critical scholars see education in relation to social justice and democracy and argue that there is an urgent need to rethink the purpose, the structure and the

content of pre-service education but also to rethink in-service education and professional development because “teachers alone, of course, cannot solve these injustices and inequities. But teaching is an inherently moral and political enterprise, and teachers’ daily actions do matter in the effort to build a more just, caring, and democratic society. Preparing and supporting teachers to engage in this intellectually and politically demanding work, therefore, is of the utmost importance” (Kelly, 2012, p. 135)

This review of the major conceptualizations of multicultural education would help identify the conceptual framework that shapes in-service education in the Sunrise School District and highlight its implications.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

For this study I draw from the post-positivistic and interpretive epistemologies. According to these approaches, individuals “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work...and develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). This implies that if our understanding and knowledge of the world is subjective and individual, then what is taken as truth is also subjective and individual. “What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). Geertz’s statement means that the researcher’s background shapes his/her intention, therefore, the researcher’s interpretations flow from his/her personal, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell, 2003). It is important here to add a few words about my assumptions in relation to meaning creation, which I alluded to in the introductory chapter. The creation of meaning is a shared and interactive process in which both the research and the researched have a symbiotic role. It is critical to qualitative research that the researcher acknowledges his or her role in the inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) point out “there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed. Subjects, or individuals, are

seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions: all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why" (p. 12)

It is therefore very likely that my cultural, ethnic and other biographical predispositions leave other competing explanations less visible in my analysis. Jaffe and Miller (1994) argue "qualitative methodologists are reminded that the assumptions of their method mean that they not only discover meaning when they enter the worlds of others, but also bestow it" (p. 55). I therefore acknowledge that the meanings I have given to the issues and experiences investigated in this study also reflect my own world views that are shaped by my membership in social groups based on, but not limited to, immigration status, gender, race-ethnicity, class, and age. As I often reiterate in this study, my "background" has always shaped my "intentions."

3.1. Reflexivity

In the context of critical research, individual awareness of the researcher is as important as the raised consciousness of the participants. In this respect Johnson (1997) identifies reflexivity as a process to understand the researcher bias; it is a process when the researcher engages in a self-discovery and in a critical self-reflection where he or she engages in exploring his/her biases and predispositions.

Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) argue that "reflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability to and willingness of

researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge” (p.222). Reflexivity, the authors add, “implies the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry; and, in between researcher and participant to the social interaction they share” (p. 222).

This research is a journey of reflection and self-discovery, the manifestation of how I deconstructed my assumptions and how I recreated my knowledge in my interaction with my participants. This self-reflexive space allowed me to engage with the complexities inherent in viewing social memberships through multiple perspectives and a critical lens and to reflect on complex issues addressing some of my own biases or internalization of oppressive structures.

3.2. Research design

A qualitative research design was used in this study due to the interpretive nature of the research conducted. This research explored five school district professionals’ perspectives and perceptions in relation to multiculturalism and the nature of multicultural education they offer to teachers. Qualitative inquiry was chosen as the research design for this study, because this research methodology allows for a more thorough description of the participants and their environment and provides an opportunity to collect rich data that

enables a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or group's experience (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative studies are primarily used to study people and their organizations in their natural settings, because "the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). People's words and actions in qualitative research tradition have significant importance as they may yield more in-depth information and may reveal new emerging themes.

This research aims to delve into the perceptions and perspectives of the professionals involved in teachers' in-service education. A case study of one school district was chosen "to learn about the phenomenon from the perspective of those in the field" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 438). Yin (2009) defines the case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 18). Tellis (1997) notes that "case studies tend to be selective, focusing on one or two issues that are fundamental to understanding the system being examined" (p. 5). He also asserts that case studies are rich due to the amount of detail and the ability to bring multiple perspectives. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) explain that "case studies are set in temporal-geographical, organizational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case, they can be defined with reference to characteristics

defined by individuals and groups involved and they can be defined by participants' roles and functions in the case " (p. 319, cited in Cohen et al, 2007, p. 253). Consistent with the above mentioned case study criteria, this case study: (a) takes place in one urban school district; (b) it explores the different perspectives of five professionals who are involved in teacher's in-service education; (c) it examines one aspect of teachers' in-service education (multicultural education); and (d) it uses multiple sources of data, including document analysis, observation, and interviews.

The intent of this research study was to construct an understanding of the perspectives related to multiculturalism and multicultural education that influence teachers' in-service education by examining curriculum documents, observing professional development sessions, and interviewing professionals responsible for providing professional development to in-service teachers.

3.3. Research questions

In order to explore teachers' in-service education related to multiculturalism in one urban school district in the Greater Vancouver Area, this research study is guided by the following questions:

- ❖ What is the nature of in-service education and professional development related to multiculturalism provided to in-service teachers by the school district and the teachers' association within a school district in the Greater Vancouver area?

- ❖ What meanings do professional development facilitators/staff construct around professional development related to multicultural education?
- ❖ What theoretical perspectives of multiculturalism are represented in the district and teacher association documents and the professional development facilitators' interviews?
- ❖ What do the data suggest about the purpose(s) that undergird professional development in relation to multicultural education within the school district?

3.4. The participants

Through a preliminary search on the school district website and informal visits to the school district, I identified a coordinator who is in charge of multicultural education within the school district. I sent a letter of initial contact to this coordinator requesting her participation in my study. In my first meeting with this coordinator I asked her about the people who are involved in multicultural education and teachers' professional development within the school district; she suggested several names; I identified the key people from the list she provided and contacted them. I sent a letter of initial contact to eight school district staff and the person in charge of professional development for the teacher association. Four participants from the school district accepted to participate in the study, and one from the Teachers' Association. The participants were two males and three females, and all of them had experience within the

school district ranging from six to twenty-five years. Four participants were from a “white” racial background, and they were monolingual. One participant was a Chinese -Canadian; he is an immigrant from mainland China and speaks both English and Mandarin. All the participants are involved in teachers’ in-service education. Three participants have leadership positions in the school district and are decision makers in the “what” and “how” of teachers’ multicultural education.

One participant in this study was the officer responsible for professional development (Pro D) in the Sunrise School District schools. Another participant was a Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS); his role was to help teachers solve the problems and issues related to the immigrant students’ adaptation and adjustment to the school environment. He worked as a liaison between the parents/students and teachers and the school. The role of the SWIS worker seems to be crucial in educating teachers about the cultural background of the immigrant students and to establish communication between school staff and students/parents. The SWIS worker has no decision making power in deciding about teachers’ Pro D. His role is “to provide information about the newcomer students’ needs and issues; helping school staff to understand a family’s situation, to provide support for newcomer students and their families as per school staff requests, through information sessions and/or workshops, [and] to support two-way communication between the home and the school” (SWIS

Leaflet, 2009). During my initial contact with the participants, the school district leaders emphasized the importance of the role of the SWIS workers and the need to talk to one of them to know more about teachers' multicultural education. All the participants participated voluntarily in this research and signed consent forms. Pseudonyms are used throughout this research paper to protect the identities of the participants.

The five respondents, who work in the school district in the Greater Vancouver area, were chosen primarily because of their leadership positions in the school district and their role in relation to professional development and multiculturalism and also to their initial receptivity to talk about this issue. Although I assume that the participants in the study are honest in their revelations I am also mindful of self-enhancing variable, which suggests according to Taylor and Brown (1988) that individuals need to present themselves in a positive light.

3.4.1. Participants' profiles

3.4.1.1. Participant 1

Mr. Brown is a senior district administrator involved with professional development in the school district for over 20 years. He is in charge of the (SWIS) Settlement Worker in Schools program. He has extensive experience with multicultural education in the school district and assumes a leadership position.

3.4.1.2. Participant 2

Ms. Smith is the district curriculum coordinator for ESL and Multiculturalism. She has had this position for five years and she has been involved in professional development in the area of ESL and multiculturalism for ten years. She worked as an ESL teacher for twenty years.

3.4.1.3. Participant 3

Ms. Caitlyn is director of instruction and learning services department. She has been working for this district since 1976. In her position, she is responsible for curriculum and instruction from pre-school to grade 12. The department is also responsible for staff development for both teachers and educational assistants. She is also involved in the professional development of school administrators.

3.4.1.4. Participant 4

Ms. Taylor is a teacher and a member of the Teachers' Association; she has been the professional development officer for the association for three years. Her role is to help schools and teachers organize professional development events.

3.4.1.5. Participant 5

Mr. Chow is a settlement worker (SWIS). His role is to help teachers solve problems and issues related to immigrant students' adaptation and adjustment

to the school environment. He serves as a liaison between the parents/students and teachers and the school.

3.5. Methods of data collection

This study attempted to answer the research questions using different sources of data, including documents, interviews, and observation. By using multiple sources of data, I aimed to obtain different perspectives. The use of multiple sources of data, often referred to as triangulation, is an attempt to allow for a more thorough interpretation of the findings (Cohen et al., 2000) since it is possible that the use of one source of data could “distort the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality” a researcher is investigating (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 112).

I started this research by collecting documents from the school district, which I describe below. Then, I observed one session of Pro D workshops conducted by one participant. This participant was the ESL and multicultural coordinator of the school district and was the main facilitator who was in charge of conducting Pro-D sessions to teachers concerning multicultural issues. I asked to attend two sessions or more, but this participant explained that because of several “privacy issues” teachers wouldn’t be comfortable to have an “outsider”. Following these informal and formal observations, I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with four professionals from the school district and one officer from the teachers’ association. The five participants are involved in

teachers' professional development related to multiculturalism. The process of data collection lasted about three months.

Each of the data collection strategies will be discussed below. During the data collection period, I used a journal to record impressions, reflections, and session observations during field research, and to document my contacts with the school district, the professional development facilitators/leaders, and the overall progress of the research process. This journal also documented my general impressions when visiting the school district, when conducting unstructured observations and when participating in casual/informal conversations with the school district professional development staff. Groenewald (2004) confirms that "recording what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the process" (p. 13) is crucial in qualitative research.

3.5.1. Documents

Documentary evidence can consist of written, oral, visual or cultural artifacts (Polkinghorne, 2005). Documents related to teachers' in-service education and professional development that address issues of multiculturalism were gathered and examined. These documents were gathered from different sources. There were electronic organizational documents, which are documents presented on the school district official website, BC ministry of education website, and the BCTF website, such as the BCTF research reports and

publications available online (www.bctf.ca/publications). Official printed documents include lists of Pro D sessions, records of Pro D sessions, session minutes, and the materials used to educate teachers about multiculturalism, such as leaflets and brochures that are distributed in the school district. I also found it useful to examine the resources used to prepare and deliver multicultural education to teachers. A book was written by one of the school district leaders who is also a participant in this study and who is considered by the school district staff and personnel to be a major reference on multicultural perspectives within the school district.

These documents have a significant importance to understand the perspectives adopted in teachers' in-service education because documents are "constructed in particular contexts, by particular people, with particular purposes, and with consequences - intended and unintended" (Mason, 2002, p. 110). Moreover, documents are important as "the written sources provide a more objective means of confirming or disconfirming the researcher's subjective interpretation of the respondents' commentary" (Merriam, 1998, p. 91). An examination of the school district's and the teacher association's professional development curricula provided significant indications about how multicultural issues are addressed and how teachers are educated.

3.5.2. Observations

This research relied partly on observation, and observation is used as a research method in two different ways - structured and unstructured (Pretzlik, 1994). Structured observation is intentional and looks for specific content and patterns of behavior or actions and uses tools of observation prepared ahead of time, such as a grid or a table to be filled. Structured observation happened during the professional development sessions I attended, where I looked for specific categories like focus of the sessions, materials used, etc. Unstructured observation took place casually and when needed, this occurred during my visits to the school district, my meetings with the participants, and during the interviews, where I took notes with the hope that I might use them later in the study. I kept a journal to record these observations. This journal also recorded my reflections during the research, including my thoughts, feelings and impressions especially during my meetings with the participants. These reflective notes are considered vital when analyzing data (Groenewald, 2004), because observation is a powerful tool to record what is seen and what is heard (as well as what is not seen or heard) in the researched site.

3.5.3. Interviews

The qualitative interview is one of the most important data gathering tools in qualitative research (Cohen et al, 2000). In fact, interviews “enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express

how they regard situations from their own point of view” (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 277). To explore the central phenomenon and to answer the research questions in this study, qualitative interviews were conducted to discover the personal perspectives and the factors that identify the teachers’ multicultural education in Sunset School district.

These individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants who were contacted and accepted to participate; they were selected according to their role in teachers’ professional development in the school district and the district-level teachers’ association. Interviews, according to Solomon & Levine-Rasky, “probe for meanings behind attitudes, beliefs, traditions and practices” (1996, p. 339). They also highlight that interviews can reveal also the contradictions between the two as participants try to explain the inconsistencies of their subjective positions and the organizational discourse.

Consistent with the tradition of qualitative research, the semi-structured formal interview allows the researcher to be both structured and flexible at the same time. This kind of interview allows the participants to be more spontaneous and more open while keeping the researcher focused on the topic (Kvale & Brinkman, 2008).

Open-ended questions were used in these interviews, which gave the participants greater freedom to express their opinions and to allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ personal perception of

multiculturalism, professional development, and the importance of teachers' multicultural education, as well as the school districts' view on multiculturalism and the perspectives that frame professional development in this area. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) posit that open ended questions allow for the informants to answer from their own frame of reference rather than being confined by the structure of pre-arranged questions.

I prepared a set of questions (see appendix A) that I posed to all the participants, but I was also aware that new themes and ideas might emerge from the participants' answers; thus, I used a semi-structured approach. The questions were divided into three categories. The first category consisted of questions about personal and biographical information regarding their role in teacher's in-service multicultural education. The second category consisted of questions about the participants' understanding of multiculturalism and other related concepts, such as anti-racism and diversity. The third category consisted of questions about actual school district efforts regarding the provision of teachers' multicultural education, where I solicited the participants' own assessment of related programs implemented within the schools and the school district.

During the interviews, I used probing techniques to encourage my interviewees to talk more. At the same time, I was aware that my probing should be neutral so that it will not redirect the interviewees. Two probing types were

used, silent probing and echo probing. Silent probing was used simply to allow the interviewee to take their time and gather their thoughts while pausing. I deliberately remained silent at times while nodding my head to encourage the interviewee to expand on an idea that I considered important. The echo probe, which is simply repeating the interviewee's phrase and asking them to continue, was used to encourage the participant to continue describing a process or an event (Bernard, 2002). Interviews took from 60 to 90 minutes each, depending on the participant's desire to elaborate on the topic. Interviews were digitally audio-recorded with the permission of participants, saved as audio files in my computer as a back-up, then sent for professional transcription. The person I hired to transcribe the interviews happened to have a strong background in my field of study and was familiar with the terms, concepts, and subject matter discussed in my meetings. This helped the transcriber identify content with more ease, especially when there was background noise. Transcripts were returned to participants to check for accuracy.

3.6. Data collection procedure

Consistent with the University of British Columbia research ethics principles, this research went through ethics review by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board. I followed a number of procedures in my study to ensure ethical research practice. I first sent a formal letter of initial contact to the school district informing them about my intention to conduct a research in the school district. In

this letter I stated my research topic, the types of participants I intend to select and requested a formal approval to conduct my research. Also, I requested the names and contact details of the key people who are involved in teachers' professional development that deals with issues of multiculturalism. After the approval of the school district to conduct the research, I sent letters of initial contact to eight people suggested by the school district *ESL and Multiculturalism* coordinator: four staff in the school district, three SWIS workers and one member of teacher association, in which I explained the topic, the nature of their participation, the time they would spend in the research and the ethical guidelines that govern my research. I contacted eight, and I got a positive reply from five who accepted to participate in the study. I followed up with phone calls and emails in case they needed more information and to arrange for the interview. This step was important and I experienced certain difficulties. Gaining access to the school district was quite challenging with the type of topic I was investigating. Again, my positionality in the form of my visible cultural and religious background made the task harder as I had to gain the participants' trust. After the participants' initial approval, I met with them individually to collect documents, familiarized them with the topic, and arranged for the interview meeting. My intention was to make them comfortable, explain the significance of the research, and also to make sure that we could find convenient time for interviewing within their busy schedules. The participants chose the

place and time of the interviews. All participants chose to grant me an interview in their offices in the school district building. All five interviews were completed within the span of two weeks. The school district and the five participants in this study were given pseudonyms for privacy and anonymity.

3.7. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted over two stages, with the first occurring while collecting documents and the second, once all interviews and observations were completed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The analysis of the documents followed a qualitative content analysis that helped construct questions to probe respondents' perceptions and understanding of multiculturalism and how teachers' multicultural education is presented in Pro-D programs. Documents were organized, categorized according to the themes suggested by the research questions and coded. In analyzing the documents I adopted the content analysis framework that Paul Gorski (2009) used in his analysis of multicultural education curriculum. I adapted his questions, as follows, to make them pertinent to my particular research purpose:

- ❖ What linguistic and lexical patterns are used to define multiculturalism and multicultural education?
- ❖ What theoretical perspectives are evident, implicitly or explicitly, in the texts?

- ❖ What is absent in the texts and what does this absence suggest about theoretical perspectives within the school district?
- ❖ What do the texts suggest, implicitly or explicitly, is the purpose of multicultural education in teachers' professional development? (adapted from Gorski, 2009).

The analysis of the documents allowed me to identify preliminary themes and codes. After the interviews were transcribed, I used the document analysis findings as a starting point to find out if the same or new themes emerged in the interviews and to compare my personal impressions recorded in my observations. The interview transcripts and field notes from observation were examined as texts and coded according to themes. Decisions concerning organizing, coding, and interpreting data were based on the themes discussed in the literature review.

Data analysis is “a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding” (Hatch, 2002, pp. 148).

My data analysis started concurrently with data collection. I agree with the scholars who argue that simultaneous data collection and analysis is advantageous in gaining more depth, as the researcher can detect issues that need more focus and investigation (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). The texts that resulted from transcription of the interviews provided the input for the analysis process which was used to make sense of the data and to reconstruct the perspectives of the participants (Boeje, 2007). To answer my research questions and to get a deep analysis of my participants' perspectives, I used "constant comparison analysis" because as described by Tesch (1990) "the method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal was to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns" (p. 96). The process of analysis was done in three steps (adapted from Boeije, 2007).

- ❖ Comparison within a single interview (for each interviewee), called also internal comparison.
- ❖ Comparison between interviews within the group of participants from the Sunrise School District staff (Mr. Brown, Ms. Caitlyn, Ms. Smith and Mr. Chow).

- ❖ Comparison of interviews from different groups (Teacher association/ School District leaders/SWIS worker).

In the first stage in the process, I had first to fragment each interview in order to identify the themes that emerged in relation to the research questions and to develop categories and label them using “codes.” Second, I identified the fragments relating to each category and compared them in order to find out whether new information about this category was given or whether the same information was repeated. The fragments were then subjected to further comparison to find out what they had in common and how they differed. This “internal comparison” was applied to all interviews. Some mixing of present and past tense here please check to see if my correction work.

The second stage in the process was to compare interviews within the same group of the Sunrise School District staff (Mr. Brown, Ms. Caitlyn, Ms. Smith, and Mr. Chow). It was important to find out if these participants who belonged to the same organization shared the same perspectives, and how they differed from each other. In this phase it was important to ask the following questions (adapted from Boeije (2002)).

- ❖ Is participant 1 talking about the same category as participant 2? What do both interviews tell us about the category?
- ❖ What are the similarities and differences between interviews 1, 2, 3, . . . ?
- ❖ What are the criteria underlying this comparison?

- ❖ What combinations of codes/concepts occur? What interpretations exist for this?

The purpose of this step was to identify relevant information to answer the research question in-depth, it was important to find the thread that connected the different experiences, perspectives of the same group participants.

The third type of comparison was conducted between the group of interviews of the School District leaders and Teacher Association participant. This step was aimed at deepening the insights; this was done by using the following questions:

- ❖ What does group 1 (School District staff) say about certain themes and what does the Teacher Association participant say about the same themes?
- ❖ Which themes appear in the interviews of the School District group but not in the interview of the Teacher Association and vice versa?
- ❖ How do both groups view the discussed issues, similarly or differently?

The whole process of data analysis was framed by the research questions and the literature, the findings were compared and contrasted to the main concepts discussed in my literature review.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings. It is thematically organized using the research questions as a framework. Direct quotations from the interview transcripts are used to provide space for the voices of the participants and to understand their perspectives. Data collection, analysis and interpretation have been conducted using an iterative process, moving back and forth within these three stages.

The findings are organized into three major sections:

The first section includes a presentation and analysis of the participants' definitions of multiculturalism and their perceptions of multicultural education and how teachers' professional development is practiced in the school district.

In the second section I present the participants' perspectives about the theoretical framework that shapes how teachers are educated through continuous professional development. These data were analyzed according to the relative manifestations, or absence, of the celebratory, critical and transformative perspectives of multicultural education discussed in the literature review.

The third section presents the findings on how the participants view the purpose of multicultural education in the current socio-economic context of the Sunrise school district.

4.1. Perspectives on multiculturalism and multicultural education

To explore multicultural education in teachers' Pro D in Sunrise School District, it is important to understand the participants' perspectives on "multiculturalism" and "multicultural education." Practices of multicultural education in school districts, and schools reflect a particular perception and understanding of "multiculturalism." As demonstrated earlier in the literature review, education is not neutral and apolitical. Even though education has a moral value "its moral nature is neither accidental nor neutral" (Mc Mahon, 2007, p. 684). Political and ideological values necessarily undergird policies, practices and discourses in education. Hence, digging in the participants' perceptions of "multiculturalism," especially that four of them are in decision-making positions in the school district, highlighted not only their personal biases and ideological assumptions, but also revealed the mechanisms of "multiculturalism" as it is practiced in the school district.

This section responds to two research questions:

- ❖ What is the nature of in-service professional development related to multiculturalism that is provided to teachers by the school district and the

teachers' association within one urban school district in the Greater Vancouver Area?

- ❖ What meanings do the school district and teacher association staff involved in professional development/in-service education construct around multicultural education?

These research questions were addressed using the following interview questions:

- When the term 'multiculturalism' is used within the school district/Teacher Association, what does it refer to, or what does it mean specifically?
- Are there other terms used that might express similar or related ideas? If so, what are they? What distinctions do you make among these terms?
- What role does professional development related to multiculturalism play in an increasingly diverse school setting? Is it a priority? Why? And why not?
- How do the school district/the Teacher Association support teachers and educate them in multicultural issues?

4.1.1. Defining multiculturalism

4.1.1.1. A blurry concept

Defining multiculturalism is both simple and complex; it is “simple in its public appeal and complex in its personal meanings for people” (Levine-Rasky, 2006, p. 87). As discussed earlier in the literature review, multiculturalism is a difficult concept to define. The term “multiculturalism” was not an easy concept to define for the participants and several definitions emerged from the participants. When participants were asked about the meaning of the term “multiculturalism” as used within the school district, they each expressed their personal perspectives agreeing that the term does not have a clear-cut meaning. Mr. Brown, for instance argued that: “The problem with the term is that nobody knows what it means. It is interpreted in many different ways. The biggest problem with multiculturalism is that it’s such a broad term and it’s very hard for anyone to come to some kind of consensus and often the term inter-culturalism is used in the same context.” Mr. Brown didn’t provide a definition of inter-culturalism. And he didn’t explain the difference between multiculturalism and inter-culturalism?

Ms. Caitlyn concurred and emphasized how difficult it is to define the concept: “I don’t know that everybody would share the same understandings or connotations for the word ‘multiculturalism’.” Ms. Caitlyn thinks that the term multicultural is not strong enough, she suggests that:

Intercultural understanding is more sophisticated and deeper.

It's where you do, you not only try and understand and be aware, but you actually engage in, and... in that exchange and that dialogue. So intercultural to me is a deeper and more sophisticated concept than multiculturalism.

Her use of inter-culturalism suggests a clear awareness that the situation in the Sunrise School District goes beyond being aware of the other different cultures, but it refers to the need to bridge those cultures and to enhance intercultural understanding. Ms. Caitlyn attitude echoes several scholars who argue that inter-culturalism is different from multiculturalism. It is deeper and shows an attitude of engagement with diversity. For instance Meer and Modood (2011) explain that there four major differences between multiculturalism and inter-culturalism, "first inter-culturalism is allegedly more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism. Second, that inter-culturalism is conceived as something less 'groupist' or more yielding of synthesis than multiculturalism. Third, it is something more committed to a stronger sense of the whole, in terms of such things as societal cohesion and national citizenship. Finally, that where multiculturalism may be illiberal and relativistic, inter-culturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices as part of the process of inter-culturalism" (p. 3). This definition highlights the fact that the major difference between "Multiculturalism" and "Inter-culturalism" is that

the former recognizes the existence of different cultures, ethnic religious groups, and different identities, but it doesn't necessarily mean that these cultures are in contact with each other and it doesn't mean that there is an attempt to open up to the "others," who are usually perceived negatively. Immigrants are "tolerated" but not valued. Inter-culturalism, on the other hand, adds a dimension of respect and recognition of the different values, and ways of life. It functions within a system of open relations of interactions and equitable relations. Inter-culturalism is a process that tries to rectify the injustices caused by "multiculturalism" and create a shared space where people's backgrounds are seen as equal and different forms of "knowledge" are valued.

As leaders in the school district, Mr. Brown and Ms. Caitlyn's statements revealed the "superficial" nature of multiculturalism and the confusion that characterize its definitions. This also highlights that they were aware of the need to approach diversity from a "deeper perspective," and that inter-culturalism is used to express that dimension. It is not surprising that all participants expressed certain discomfort when trying to define multiculturalism. The fact that multiculturalism is intertwined with immigration policy, culture, identity, legislations and education, a plethora of definitions and conceptualizations emerged. The concept of multiculturalism has been identified from different lenses and approaches because "multiculturalism means everything and at the same time nothing...That's why the term has to be always explained and

annotated when used; all participants had to express what multiculturalism meant to them: No one can speak of multiculturalism or multicultural education without delineating what he or she means or does not mean" "(Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 1).

4.1.1.2. "Multiple" but "Not Aboriginal"

Ms. Smith tried to deconstruct this compound noun into its separate parts, focusing more on the first part "multi" stating that multiculturalism "refers to the, hmmm, the key there is the word 'multiple', that we have multiple contexts, multiple backgrounds, multiple ethnicities, multiple languages." Ms. Taylor explained the term more precisely by adding examples: "Well, we refer to multiculturalism as children – or students – from various cultures... for instance, we have an Oriental culture, and we have a French culture, and a Muslim culture, and African culture... there are many cultures in our district."

This participant referred to the different categories that can be associated with "multiculturalism;" she mentioned a broad racial group (Oriental), a religious group (Muslim), a continent (Africa), and a language/culture. It is important to note that in this statement the participant didn't mention two major components of the Canadian cultural scene; Ms. Taylor didn't mention the White, Western, Anglophone culture, nor did she mention the Aboriginal culture. The first is overlooked because it is so existent and legitimized to the

extent it has become the norm. “White” culture is “normalized;” it is the “common sense” and the legitimate culture. The absence of Aboriginal population and culture was a common thing between all participants, and this may be due to the fact that there aren’t a significant number of Aboriginal students in the school district, but may also be due to an existing debate and controversy about how Aboriginal populations position themselves vis-à-vis multiculturalism. Not talking about the Aboriginal culture may imply that these participants concurred with the argument that Aboriginal culture is not part of “Canadian Multiculturalism” because as according to Paine (1999) “it is not useful to include aboriginality within the rubric of multiculturalism. While both lead to discourses about difference, they emphatically take divergent courses, in both the past and the present” (p. 326). Aboriginal peoples were the owners of the land and their struggle is more than about the recognition that they are different and distinct, but a struggle to regain their lands and identity. There is a major difference between immigrants and natives because “there is a fundamental difference between a story that places people as coming *to* the land and a story that has people coming *from* the land” (Marker, 2011, p. 99). Aboriginal people believe that “Multiculturalism works against Aboriginal sovereignty and anti-colonialism in its production of national histories that imagine Canada as a socially just and successful multicultural state. Normative Canadian history produces Canada as a nation that is “tolerant” and “innocent”” (St Denis, 2011, p.

310) and enhances the denial of a history of brutal colonization and ill-treatments in residential schools. The discourse of multiculturalism seems to be unable to contain a long history of suffering, debilitation and exclusion of the Aboriginal people, St Denis (2011) argues that “Multiculturalism is dependent on colonial structures because it assumes the legitimacy of the current colonial Canadian government. As multiculturalism ignores ongoing colonialization, the result is a trivializing and erasing of Aboriginal sovereignty” (p. 311).

4.1.1.3. Multiculturalism is only about immigrants

All participants confirmed that “multiculturalism” is a fact and a reality of the Canadian society in general and the school district in particular. It is a “challenge” that they all connect to the “current” immigrants and immigration trends.

All participants agreed that the term “multiculturalism” refers to the different immigrants’ cultures that make the “Canadian mosaic”. For instance, Mr. Brown explains that “Typically people think of multiculturalism as multiethnic definition of our current immigrant demographics.” For instance, in the Sunrise school district attention was paid to multiculturalism when the number of nonwestern immigrants increased significantly at their schools. Ms. Smith explained that :

It was about in the early 1990s where there was a large influx of immigrants from – from all over, but particularly Hong

Kong. And so we went quite quickly to a real increase in the number of ESL students in our district. And then, so there was a large influx, and then it gradually declined a little bit, and so now our demographics are, we have students, we have 65-plus languages spoken by our students in the schools, but in the last... well, since the 1990s its predominantly Chinese... students of Chinese background, but also many, many Filipino students, many, many Russian students, many South Asian students, and then from all over the world. But the largest proportion are students from China, originally Hong Kong, and then students from mainland China.

All participants shared Ms. Caitlyn statement about the swift changes and the increasing number of Chinese immigrants. All participants linked “multiculturalism “ to the current immigrant demographics, references to the period from the 1990’s to the present and multiculturalism is associated with the immigrants in opposition to “Canadian.” Mr. Brown stated that:

Typically, Canadians of long term residence in Canada, who have been here for several generations they see themselves as Canadians and the other as the multicultural and I even had conversations in past years with people of other ethnicities

who refer to themselves as multicultural. You are multicultural, I am not.

When this participant says "*I am not*" he actually doesn't racialize the "White" Canadian; he doesn't perceive "white" as a race. This is consistent with Kendall's (2001) statement that "whiteness, with its privilege and power, is so pervasive that it becomes invisible. It's sort of like asking fish to notice water or birds to discuss air. For those who have privilege . . . it just is – it's normal" (p. 1). From my physical features and veil, Mr. Brown identified that "I am multicultural," an attitude that shows a latent belief that I cannot be from the "Canadian" culture that presents itself as White, Western, Anglophone and Christian by default. According to multiculturalism scholars this concept of "Canadian" versus "immigrant" echoes the discourse of the monoculturalists, who employ the binary opposition of "we" and "they" so often (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). The "othering" of immigrants was expressed extensively by the four "white" participants. "The others" are the immigrants who come from non-western background. It is known that almost all Canadians, except for those of aboriginal heritage, are descendants of immigrants at some point in Canadian history. However, this issue of multiculturalism became a concern, with the flow of immigrants who came from Asia and Africa. As it is explained above, the swift demographic changes caused by immigration gave importance to

multiculturalism in the Sunrise school and made it necessary to accommodate this ethnic and cultural diversity.

4.1.1.4. Multiculturalism is the policy of Canada

Mr. Chow emphasized the importance of multiculturalism as an official policy. This participant is the only one who is from an Asian ethnic background (Chinese) and is an immigrant himself. Mr. Chow tried to emphasize his “Canadianess” and his sense of belonging to Canada:

Well, multiculturalism as far as we understand, this is the policy of Canada. It is a very important policy, especially in the immigration policy, and we always emphasize in all levels of government, I believe. Right... federal, provincial, and also city government. First of all, number one is that we want our people, I mean the citizens, or Canadians, to understand this multiculturalism is our policy; is a policy, okay; and we want to promote this policy. We agree with this policy, we support this policy, and we want to promote it, in our Canadian culture.

Through the use of the pronouns “We,” “our people” and “our Canadian culture,” Mr. Chow echoes the attitude of so many immigrants that see the importance of multiculturalism policies because in “their views, multiculturalism

had symbolically acknowledged the importance of immigration and the diversity of immigrant experiences and contributions in Canada” (Gilbert, 2007, p. 17).

Gilbert (2007) confirms that immigrants were very supportive; this policy allowed immigrants to preserve their cultures and languages and at the same time “the policy initially created a legitimizing space where immigrants and ethnic groups could pursue demands for inclusion and access to state resources”(p. 17). Mr. Chow’s attitude implies, according to Ali (2008), how so many immigrants “believe in the ideology of Canadian multiculturalism” (p. 90) and support it.

Contrary to the focus on the positive connotations of multiculturalism-- such as “harmony” and “harmonious ,” “respect,” and “celebration” in Ms. Smith, Ms. Caitlyn, Ms. Taylor and Mr. Chow perceptions of multiculturalism- Mr. Brown presents a rather intriguing perception that defines multiculturalism from a different perspective, where instead of harmony and respect we have dominant and subordinate, victim and victimizers, powerful and powerless. Mr. Brown stated that:

people who were once victims are not made immune from being victimizers , I think lots of examples of that and unfortunately that seems a human nature that people with no power are not more worthy than the people with power, they just don’t have the power at this particular moment and when

that power dynamic changes, they change and it's really unfortunate that seems to be human nature, and I think the challenge is to try to catch those people when they are powerless and say look someday you will have power and when you do, please try to remember this, and don't do exactly the same thing that happened to you a generation ago.

In his statement, the use of "victims" and "victimizers," "power," and "powerless," is very significant; Mr. Brown indirectly evokes that the history of multiculturalism in Canada is far from being peaceful, a history of "racial segregation in schools, forced assimilation of First Nations Canadians, racist immigration restrictions, anti-Semitism, the mistreatment of Chinese immigrant railway workers, and the displacement and internment of Japanese-Canadians" (Lund, 2006, p. 206). Mr. Brown seems also to be criticizing newer immigrants who, once they are here long enough, also become normalized and begin to see new immigrants as "other."

4.1.1.5. Multiculturalism is only about culture

Data revealed that there is surprising consensus among all participants that multiculturalism means the culture of "immigrants," and how they differ from the mainstream, dominant culture of "Canadians." This definition implies that multiculturalism is a challenge and a problem that needs to be fixed at

school in order to adjust the immigrants to the “Canadian” culture. All definitions of multiculturalism provided by the participants are limited only to the construct of culture and cultural difference and preclude attention to gender, class and sexual orientation. The five participants stated that multicultural education is the “celebration” and the “tolerance” of “other” cultures. Ms. Caitlyn confirmed that

Over the years inclusion and multiculturalism have really come to mean everybody, and the celebration of culture, both Canadian culture and other cultures, is all about supporting student success, and understanding each other can only, I think, contribute to having a peaceful world for people to live in.

This confirms Gilbert’s (2007) statement that “multiculturalism in Canada has been articulated around national and ethnocultural differences linked to immigration. Although not mutually exclusive, other expressions of diversity (e.g. gender, sexuality, language, status, or other cultural differences) are rarely included in the discourse of multiculturalism” (p. 16). It is surprising that participants did not mention gender, class, and sexual orientation as other forms of difference that exist in schools; it seems that it is easier to manage schools through Canadian versus immigrant, native speaker versus ESL

with the assumption that gender and sexual identity is what we see and that students are equal and have the same opportunities. This confirms McMahon's (2007) finding that "multiculturalism assumes very superficial connotations related to surface-level manifestations of culture and ignores the historical and social constructions of race with their attendant presence or absence of power and privilege" (p. 688).

I found it essential to explore how the different participants define related concepts and terms that are used in the school district. One term closely related to multiculturalism produced a similar abundance of definitions and somewhat the same confusion over its meaning. This was the term "diversity." For the Sunrise school district participants, multiculturalism and diversity are two different things.

4.2. Defining diversity

In the introduction of *Diversity in BC schools: A framework* (2008), a document that BC Ministry of Education provided to clarify the issue of diversity in BC schools, diversity "refers to the ways in which we differ from each other. Some of these differences may be visible (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability), while others are less visible (e.g., culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background). This document is a conceptual framework. Its purpose is to:

- assist the school system in meeting its obligations under the Constitution Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Code, the Multiculturalism Act, the Official Languages Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the School Act; and
- assist the school system in its ongoing efforts to create and maintain learning and working environments that are responsive to the diverse social and cultural needs of the communities it serves” (2008, p. 5).

This document describes key concepts, references, guiding legislation and includes important implications for policies, strategies and initiatives in the school system related to diversity, multiculturalism, racism, human rights and social justice. Despite the document’s clear position that diversity encompasses several aspects, Sunrise school district leaders and teacher association representative made a consensus that “diversity” means “special needs students.” When participants were asked about “diversity” and if it is connected to multiculturalism, it was surprising that they all agreed that in the school district “diversity” is used when they talk about special needs students, not immigrant students. Ms. Taylor explained that “We use words like ‘diversity’ to talk about the different needs of our children, as opposed to their cultural backgrounds.” She added when asked if diversity means ‘ability’: “Yes. If a child is – has an IEP, or has a learning disability, that would mean you have a diverse class.” Understanding diversity from this perspective seems to be common

among the school district leaders and teachers. Mr. Brown confirmed that there is a kind of misinterpretation of “diversity.” He argued that in the school district:

Diversity is used too but funny enough diversity can also be misinterpreted and a lot of people think about diverse learners as people with learning disabilities and it’s really amazing how often when people are talking about people with special needs they talk about diversity and diverse learners and I’ve had to point out a couple of time that there’s potential for confusion here.

This confusion is clear in Ms. Smith’s statement that when she said that “diversity also, this term is also used, and also one thing in our school district particularly, we are really strong in promoting the inclusion policy.” Ms. Caitlyn used another term “inclusion” and brought up the issue of inclusive education and explained the connection between multiculturalism and inclusive education: “So inclusion actually, the inclusion policy emphasizes including all types of students; students with disabilities, learning disabilities, learning difficulties, autism, and it also preach to our school community that our school district welcomes all kinds of people.” The last sentence in this quote, Ms. Caitlyn uses “all kinds of people,” is a vague and general statement that avoids mentioning controversial issues such as class, sexual orientation, gender and race. Ms.

Caitlyn, like all other participants, presented a limited definition of diversity, a conservative discourse that doesn't shake the norms of the mainstream culture. She added:

The other big change in the district is the incidence of students with special needs, and the shift in our model about 25 years ago, from segregated settings and special classes, to inclusive opportunities for all students. So there's a great deal of diversity in all of our schools. And so we do our best to try to help staff with accommodating and celebrating diversity.

It was surprising that the participants limited diversity to "ability" and ignored other forms of diversity; the idea of culture, gender, sexual identity and social class are missing from the term. The participants didn't refer to the ministry's diversity framework as a conceptual framework that would inform their work. Ms. Caitlyn focused on inclusion as a concept that includes all types of diversity and emphasized the school district success in inclusive education; however, the BCTF reports that "British Columbia is reflecting troubling signs of systemic actions and discrimination which are reducing the opportunities for inclusion. It may be leading the country backwards" (Naylor, 2007, p. 251). The focus on 'Standards', standardized tests, accountability contracts, performativity, would systematically exclude individual needs and put pressures on school districts and schools to invest in the students who are likely going to

pass these tests, and eventually ESL students, Special needs students, all students that can't board the mainstream boat would be left behind. Naylor (2007) confirms this reality "proves that there appears to be a general apathy to the concept of Inclusion. Apathy equates to neglect, the antithesis of inclusion which actively seeks to include all in schooling and society" (p. 228).

4.3. Multicultural teacher education in the Sunrise school district

From the interviews conducted with the participants, who all have different roles to play in the teachers' professional development program or in-service, several themes emerged:

4.3.1. Multicultural education is important, but is it a priority?

Although the five participants had different roles in teachers' professional development common threads were most often found between them as themes emerged, but there were also findings unique to each role. For instance, all participants agree that the demographic changes have a great impact on teachers' work, especially in the current demographic situation in Canada in general and in the school district in particular. They all also expressed the importance of educating teachers about multicultural issues. They all contended that teachers need support and help to deal with the challenges of demographic changes. When asked "what role does professional development related to multiculturalism play in an increasingly diverse school setting?" Ms. Smith

confirms that “It [professional development] plays a key role.” Ms. Caitlyn, from her position as a leader in the district explains:

Well, we believe that it’s important that a school district is a learning community. A learning community, not just for the students in our buildings, but for the staff in our buildings. And professional development, in all of its phases, and there are many forms of professional development, and that includes giving professional development workshops, or in-service training.

Mr. Chow thinks that:

[professional development] is very important because our school district... many of them as you can see are from Asia, okay, and it is always a learning process for the Caucasian citizens to learn more about these newcomers, this new culture.

To Mr. Chow, professional development seems to be very important for the “Caucasian “teachers to survive the influx of “immigrants,” “the newcomers,” and the need for support and education is quite urgent.

Mr. Brown agreed with the above statements about the importance of professional development as related to multiculturalism, but he was critical of

the current situation of multicultural education in the school district, and unlike Ms. Smith and Ms. Caitlyn, he confirmed that multicultural teacher education is not a priority in the school district; he added “absolutely not [a priority]. It’s frustrating, but the thing is who am I to say what the priority should be.”

Data analysis confirms the literature review findings about multicultural education in teachers’ in-service. In the Sunrise school district, it is based on a “one shot,” “one day or half a day workshop.” Mr. Brown explained that:

In the academic year, typically a school district provides about five professional development days a year and typically individual schools will devote three or four of those days to in-house issues that might be a new reading program , a new math program, the curriculum is constantly changing, and this always driving a lot of the pro-D, because people have to know how to use the new curriculum, and there might be one to two days a year devoted to district wide in-service or province wide in-service like the PSA day that happens in October every year. Occasionally, myself and the colleagues in my field will get invited to talk about MC and ESL, that happened far more ten to fifteen years ago when the rapid change was in everybody’s face and you still had an older white teaching population and you had a lot of new kids

coming in with limited English ...etc. So it was urgent and people tend to function on the urgent and so if things are kind of working out OK, it drops down in priority, so a lot of in-service goes into supporting kids with autism, for example, because if you are a classroom teacher and a kid is screaming that's an urgent problem, and you need to know how to support that kid or the rest of the kids in your class with this kid screaming all day long, so that's really urgent and so teachers who would want to focus on that would say, yeah yeah, I understand diversity and MC, sure sure, that's not my issue right now... my issue right now is this kid who's disrupting the class and I have to learn how to manage and support this kid. That's the reality, it's driven by pragmatism.

It is surprising that school district leaders are aware of the importance of educating teachers and supporting them, but the system is not working to transform multicultural education from its narrow, limited and technical focus. Mr. Brown was the only participant who expressed a critical attitude to the existing Pro D and in-service programs in the school district:

What should occur and what does occur are different things.

But what should occur is an acknowledgment that Canada is a multicultural society, especially in urban Canada and as we

accept this realization that this is where Canada is going and people need to understand that this is not a marginal thing that is passing but this is a new reality that's going to be here indefinitely and as such for pre-service as well as in-service there has to be significant attention given to supporting ethnic diversity and linguistic diversity.

This participant, who is a leader in the school district and has been involved in teachers' education and Pro D in the school district, highlights two important issues: First, multiculturalism is still not perceived as a reality of Canada, and second multiculturalism is not a priority in the school district; and there is a reluctance to admit that the demographics of the Sunrise school district have changed tremendously. Mr. Brown explained that the current situation of multicultural education in Sunrise school district shows that "there's this kind of denial that the demographics in the school system have changed absolutely completely, but at the other end of the school for the most part business is as usual."

Ms. Caitlyn agrees that the demographic changes impact teachers and she emphasized that the current situation of the Sunrise school district requires a change in teachers' education and preparation. She stated that

The impact on teachers is the need to develop intercultural understandings, so that they understand where kids are coming from, in terms of values and practices, and where the parents are coming from. It has had a huge impact on communication. And the need for interpretation, and translation, and the sensitivity of customs and practices, so that people feel regarded and respected.

Contrary to Mr. Brown, Ms. Caitlyn showed a sense of satisfaction and pride in the progress of multicultural education in the school district, she confirmed that

It [multicultural education] definitely has progressed. Definitely. A long, long way. There's much more willingness and interest in wanting to understand it, and work with the understandings... there was once upon a time much more resistance, because it was feared.

Ms. Caitlyn emphasized also the success of Canada in being a multicultural country; she stated:

Canada is such a great country, because we have a mosaic... we have much more of an integrated approach to multiculturalism... Canada didn't have to go through that same civil rights movement [in US]; it has a different approach to it, and I think that's great

Ms. Caitlyn expressed how organizing the 2010 Olympics enhanced BC multicultural spirit and is a clear example of defying racism

I think the Olympics have really helped people understand it's not just who wins, it's about working together and playing together, and that that's really important.. .and I think for the world we have to understand each other. The world has shrunk... you know, we can get anywhere in less than a day... we have communication all over the place... we're one big global village now – if we want to be. We can go and hide and pretend to be racist – or BE racist – but that's not gonna help us.

Despite all participants' emphasis that multicultural education is necessary, the school district, and teacher association documents and the participant interviews demonstrate that a very limited number of Pro D sessions are about issues related to multiculturalism. They are restricted to a session or two per year, and these sessions are not compulsory and they are usually presented to ESL teachers.

The situation of in-service multicultural education in Sunrise school district confirms the findings of several other researchers, who agree that in-service multicultural education is based on short, single-shot, underfunded, and crisis-oriented projects (Sleeter, 1993; Solomon, 1996). This comes in line with

Solomon's (1995) statement that teachers usually find "in-service programs to be inadequate, ineffective and spotty, with many becoming known as one day, one shot P.D." (p. 256). It seems that teacher multicultural education in the Sunrise school district in 2010 is quite similar to the situation described in Solomon's research sixteen years ago. This finding emphasizes that there is a clear reluctance to invest in long term and sustainable multicultural programs and there is a reluctance to change teacher multicultural education in Pro Ds and in-service despite the abundant policy texts and the rhetoric of change and reform.

4.4. The theoretical framework: The manifestations, or absence, of the celebratory, critical and transformative perspectives of multicultural education

This section presents the findings that answer the following research question. "What theoretical perspectives of multiculturalism are represented in the district and teacher association documents and the professional development facilitators' interviews?"

Mr. Brown explains that:

The multicultural framework is much more nebulous, is based on the few people who see it as part of their role within the system to provide some leadership in that field and we base it on talking to other people, conversations happen within

committees, books that we read, talks that we attend, but
there's no theoretical framework.

This school district leader expressed that within the school district, there is no clear or explicit conceptual framework that informs the teachers' multicultural education and Pro Ds curricula and programs. He asserts that it is the work of "a few people", and he is one of this group that has been involved in the debate about multiculturalism in Sunrise school district. Mr. Brown didn't give a clear explanation for why there is no clear conceptual framework, and he emphasized that Multicultural education in the school district depends on the school district leaders in multiculturalism and he is one of them.

All participants needed explanation of the term "theoretical framework" and in order to get the appropriate information, I had to ask several probing questions. For example:

- ❖ What research and who are the researchers /scholars that inform the Pro D curriculum in the school district?
- ❖ What resources do you use in your work in multicultural education?
- ❖ Who are the researchers/ scholars that inform your work?
- ❖ What resources are available to teachers to enhance their multicultural education?

While participants did not directly refer to the conceptualizations presented in the literature review, their comments suggest that the following themes inform the conceptualization of multiculturalism in Sunrise School District:

4.4.1. **“We really celebrate multiculturalism in our school district”**

When asked about the different activities and issues addressed to educate and support teachers in multicultural issues, Ms. Smith explained that in the school district multicultural education:

varies from site to site, but we have our cultural interpreters, and we have our SWIS workers, and then throughout the year a lot of the curriculum is involved with cultural issues, and... for example Chinese New Year comes up in January/ February of the calendar year, and so if you walk into the schools, you’ll see it’s very obvious that that’s an event that many of our students are participating in, in their homes and in the school. I sent out to the teachers and administrators every year a list of significant cultural holidays, so that they can build some professional development around them and so that they know when they are coming up and that the students may be involved in those particular dates... I also

send out to each school a multi-faith calendar, where there's all kind... a beautiful calendar that's to be put in a public place in the school, usually near the secretary, or else the PA system, or somewhere lots of people have access to it and can refer to it, and it has information, so much information about different faiths throughout the school year. And at the same time it's a, it can be used in humanities or in art classes, because there's some beautiful art work in it as well.

Mr. Chow explained the different activities that are held to educate teachers about multicultural issues:

During the school year, for example... lunar New Year, the Chinese New Year, is a very big event... and also I can say that our Indian community is also very popular in our school district; so we also celebrate Indian festivals. And also Filipino, also a big part of our community; also Japan has a root in our history of ... they came many, many years ago as fishermen, so they have a very long history here in our city. So yeah, we celebrate all these festivals very openly, and we always want our students to understand we promote multiculturalism, and through the celebrations we try to educate our teachers, we try to promote multiculturalism.

Mr. Brown mentioned “the friendship clubs” which exist in many schools and aim to bridge the cultural gap between the different cultural backgrounds through the focus on the celebration of these cultures.

From the participants’ comments, I could actually identify that multicultural education is about “celebration” of “other” cultures, not the “Canadian Culture;” this type of multiculturalism is known in the literature as “celebratory” and “tokenistic.” This “celebratory” perspective seems to be the dominant framework that directs teachers’ education in Sunrise School district, an approach sometimes known as the 3-D approach “dance, dress, and dining” (Srivastava, 2007). This approach uses the celebration of cultural difference and the narrative of the Canadian nation as raceless, benevolent, and innocent to silence issues of power, race, gender, sexual identity and to enhance the reproduction of racial privilege (Bannerji, 2000; Dei & Calliste, 2000; Lund, 2006b; Razack, 1998; Solomon, 1996).

What I consider to be a very surprising finding in this theme is that the Sunrise School District Teacher Association shares the same perspective of multicultural education; for instance, Ms. Taylor stated when talking about the kind of issues discussed and presented in Pro D and in-service:

In the last convention, which was 2009, we did have some presenters on the field – in the area - of multiculturalism; they were SWIS workers, so Settlement Workers in Schools; and one woman presented on Indian marriages, and this time I believe... ah, I can't remember exactly the topic, but two SWIS workers emailed me with a topic on multiculturalism. So they will be presenting again.

Ms. Taylor, as a representative of the teacher association and contrary to British Columbia Teachers' Federation discourse and advocacy for a more critical and social justice oriented multicultural education, presents a "tokenistic" perspective of multicultural education, that focuses only on teaching teachers and staff about content such as the Chinese calendar, Indian weddings, Muslim faith calendar, Japanese food, heroes and holidays.

This attitude reflects a "tokenistic approach" of multicultural education that dominates the school district, and which confines multiculturalism within the boundaries of "food, dance and festivals," an approach that celebrates difference as long as it doesn't interfere with the functioning of the system. This fact was highlighted by Marshal (2004), who contends that "those who present challenges--truths and voices of immigrants, ethnic groups, poverty, disability, gay/lesbian, disenfranchised community groups, and the like--are sometimes tolerated as long as they do not propose changing the normal activities or

standards of practice” (p. 5). The celebratory approach recognizes the right of the others to maintain their cultural heritage and their first language; it also emphasizes the harmony that should exist between the different cultures. Moreover, the celebratory approach in the Sunrise School District takes the forms of one international day or a cultural festival in order to discover the “others” faith calendar, dance, food and clothes. Other forms of knowledge are excluded and denied. The situation in the Sunrise school district supports the findings in the literature about Canadian multiculturalism famous for “the images of multiculturalism: newspaper photos of parades with colourfully costumed performers in “ethnic dress;” the collage of diverse faces in the “Canadian family tree” adorning the covers of government publications; and the displays of ethnic and fusion dishes in magazine food features” (Iacovetta, 2009, p. 16)

4.4.2. Immigrants’ integration or assimilation?

All participants expressed that the cultural background that immigrant students bring to school is most of the time different from the mainstream Canadian culture, and they all emphasized the importance of multicultural education to help teachers understand their students’ background. Ms. Caitlyn explained that the focus of the in-service multicultural education is about

what does the culture value, what are the cultural habits,
what is important to understand; you know, some parents
have different parenting styles, and we need to understand

and respect that, while at the same time, you know, that's a struggle for some of our teachers, when the Western parenting style doesn't match the Asian parenting style, and the teachers expect the little ones to be, you know, hanging up their own coats and eating their own food, so they have to be sensitive in working with the moms who just want to come and sit and feed their kids when they're still seven years old. So, you know, they say, 'well, you may do this in your home, but in Canada we don't do it this way', so it's just kind of respecting both worlds.

Ms. Caitlyn expresses that the different students' cultures, the different ways of parenting, the different cultural values should be kept at "home;" in Canada, schools are run by "Western style" and Western knowledge, even if the reality of the school district demographics confirms that the majority of the students are not "Western." This is further evidence to explain how in Canada, there is still belief in one culture and a legitimization of one knowledge. All the rest should be assimilated to this Western schooling culture. Mr. Chow expresses how Canadian knowledge (Eurocentric) is legitimate because it's superior to other forms of knowledge; he asserted that

my job, is to explain to the newcomers our philosophy, our teaching philosophy, our education philosophy, and we have

to explain to them why. Why is this a better philosophy, and we have to explain to them all the researches that we have made in the past 20 years, and we have to explain to them now, currently, Canadian education system ranks second in the world.

This attitude confirms Solomon's argument (2002) that "Despite three decades of official multiculturalism, the assimilationist attitude remains well entrenched in the dominant group Canadian psyche. Federal and provincial human rights codes that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, ethnicity and nationality haven't liberated groups perceived as different. There is still the expectation of conformity to the dominant culture" (p. 183). All cultures that are different from the Western culture are trivialized and oppressed, their existence is reduced to the exotic taste of food and the colorful costumes. Kelly (2012) explains that "the dominant group's experience and culture reigns as common sense, the unquestioned norm. The oppressed group is stereotyped and portrayed as 'the Other,'" (p. 139). This dominant Western view of society render the perspectives of the oppressed groups invisible (Young, 1990).

The dominance of a Eurocentric world view in Canadian schools and the representation of the "other cultures" is characterized by stereotypes and a deficit perspective, discussed thoroughly in the literature, and the most clear

example is the situation of the Indigenous culture in the education system.

Battiste (2002) argues that “Eurocentric thought asserts that only Europeans can progress and that Indigenous peoples are frozen in time, guided by knowledge systems that reinforce the past and do not look towards the future” (p. 4). This attitude is closely connected to a deficit perspective that “views cultural backgrounds and the world views that students bring to school as problematic and not beneficial for learning” (Blackmore, 2006, p. 188). What immigrants have produced in Canadian society is mainly viewed with caution and sometimes opposition, while the changes immigrants are expected to make in the process of integration are considered necessary and positive (Li, 2004).

All participants expressed a strong moral commitment to support multicultural education, but this has to be done without shaking the status-quo and without changing the set of systems that govern schools. Issues of power, mainstream culture, dominant culture and disadvantaged cultures are not subjects of discussion in the school district. The situation of multicultural education in the school district shows that “the dual strains of consciousness--support for multiculturalism and uneasiness with living in it--indicates a moral impasse” (Levine-Rasky, 2006, p. 8). Hence, the celebratory multiculturalism represents the best strategy to show respect and acknowledgment of the “other cultures” and the peaceful, harmonious relationship between the different races, while at the same time silencing issues of equality, discrimination, power

relations and racism. This situation, according to Lund (2006), “may well emerge partly from our stereotypical Canadian politeness to shy away from controversy and conflict, and partly from a subconscious desire by many to deny the racialized divides that perpetuate an inequitable playing field in education that offers greater benefits to certain players” (p. 219).

4.4.3. Absence of critical and transformative discourses in the Sunrise school district

I asked the participants if the discussion around multiculturalism goes beyond celebrating cultures and ESL and if they deal with critical issues, such as antiracism and social justice. The BC Ministry of Education provides a definition for anti-racism education which states that: “Anti-racism education promotes the elimination of racism through identifying and changing institutional policies and practices as well as identifying individual attitudes and behaviours that contribute to racism.” According to the BC ministry, anti-racism education involves:

- ❖ proposing the need to reflect about one's own attitudes on race and anti-racism
- ❖ understanding what causes racism in order to achieve equality
- ❖ identifying and addressing racism at both the personal and institutional level

- ❖ acknowledging the need to take individual responsibility for eliminating racism
- ❖ working toward removing systemic barriers that marginalize groups of people
- ❖ providing opportunities for individuals to take action to eliminate all forms of racism, including stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. (BC Ministry of Education, 2004)

My interview data reveals that all my participants seem to agree that there is an absence of critical/transformational multiculturalism, and antiracism education. They make the following claims.

4.4.3.1. “There is no racism in the school district”

Participants stated that there is no racism in the district schools, and that’s why it is not an issue that needs focus. Mr. Brown explains that

if that in your face conflict did exist, there would be more emphasis on multiculturalism I think; but because for the most part people see more similarities than differences, yes there are obvious visible differences, linguistic differences, but I think the core values are similar.

This statement illustrates the attitude of all participants, who confirmed that antiracism education is not needed in the school district professional

development or Pro D's because there is no racial conflict. Racism was defined by all participants as personal prejudice. All participants confirmed that "there is no racism in the school district schools". Mr. Chow, for instance, fervently argued that

Just from my personal experience, I have to say that I have never encountered – personally – I've never encountered, or I've never seen, any case or incident or happenings directly related to racism. Never. Personally. Never. [long pause] Discrimination, again, hardly from my memory. And that is my personal actual experience. I would say none. And from the newspaper – I also read local newspaper, and Vancouver Sun – and according to my personal memory, I have never seen any news, actual accusation, of certain district teaching staff that are involved in racism or discrimination. Not out of my own memory.

This statement doesn't reflect the reality of the situation in Canadian schools; racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination are a reality in Canadian schools (Bannerji, 2000; Dei, 2002; Solomon et al., 2005). Mr. Chow presented a dominant perspective of racism and discrimination in the Canadian psyche, discrimination and racism are perceived as individual actions that can be dealt with as "cases" of

disrespect and “misbehaviour” regarding “the other,” this perspective ignores the systematic and institutional racism. Racial incidents, stereotyping, name calling, bullying, are examples of exclusionary practices that hide racist attitudes, and in Sunrise school district schools exhibited several forms of discrimination. When I examined the School district documents, several leaflets and fliers stated “Stop Racism” and all participants agreed that “bullying” is a serious issue in Sunrise schools. In the same school district “a swastika, the words “white power,” and anti-Semitic and anti-Asian slogans were scrawled on the exterior walls of [Carlton]elementary school Friday night or early Saturday morning” (CBC, 2011).

The racist graffiti appeared on the walls of two schools, the graffiti shocked the community as they express an overt form of racism; it is also shocking that the graffiti appeared on schools in a district that is well known for its excellent achievement in racial coexistence.

In Sunrise school district, there is an attempt to deny the existence of racism, trivialize issues of discrimination and inequality, and an attempt to focus on the “harmonious” racial relationships. Mr. Chow added that multicultural education is “not assimilationist; not like other countries. In Canada we celebrate diversity, and we promote multiculturalism. This is number one.”

Discrimination is a reality in Canada, and no school district can claim that it is discrimination free. In a report that has been commissioned by the Department of Canadian Heritage to foster research on removal of barriers facing vulnerable groups in Canadian society, including racial and religious minorities, Cassin and colleagues (2007) confirmed that there are “new and contemporary forms of racism and racial discrimination experienced by visible minorities in Canada at the beginning of the 21st century.” They also confirmed that:

- ❖ Racism is part of the fabric of Canadian society and that it has become more subtle over time.
- ❖ Racism is characterized as systemic in institutions and practiced in culture, communication, (absence of) representation of diversity and assumption of dominant paradigms.
- ❖ Racism is further characterized as part of the informal culture and is experienced as part of ordinary interaction (p. 5).

The findings of the report clearly identified that schools play a key role in the reproduction of the status-quo and social inequities. And so, in Sunrise school district. Participants’ attitudes and perspectives confirm that “the administrators generally view these issues from an organizational perspective that does not challenge hegemonic structures. They typically understand social justice from non-critical perspectives, see

whiteness at the level of the individual, racism as unacceptable individual acts, and multiculturalism as preferable to anti-racism” (McMahon, 2007, p. 684). There was a consensus from all participants that we shouldn’t talk about racism; they didn’t even want to “say” the word. It was as if just mentioning the word “racism” can ruin the image of the school district, and just like Ahmed (2010), I learned from this study “how diversity-proud organizations are often the ones that defend hardest against hearing about racism. It is as if speaking about racism is to introduce bad feelings into organizations; it is as if you hurt or bruise the ego ideal of the organization as being diverse (p. 591).

4.4.3.2. “Teachers don’t want to discuss political issues”

The school district leaders and participants explained that the absence of critical multicultural education is the result of teachers’ attitudes and reluctance to discuss Political issues. Political issues refer to all controversial issues that would question or critique the status -quo. According to Mr. Brown teachers don’t want to move out of their comfort zone because “you often get teachers to come from very sheltered personal experience and they don’t see this as an issue.” Indirectly, Mr. Brown explained that the majority of educators and teachers come from the dominant culture. He added that critical multiculturalism, antiracism and social justice issues do not attract teachers, “there have been workshops aimed at how we’re going to combat racism; you

know when you get right there and say something right up front you get very poor attendance, yeah, you get much better attendance when it's more of general background on a particular cultural group." He also explained that teachers do not like to have Pro D sessions that confront them and make them feel bad:

you would encourage teachers to attend social justice type workshops with the guarantee that you are not going to be threatened by it, a lot of people don't want to go and get hammered over the head about how bad they are.....but people are going to be a lot more responsive to it, and they are going to hear lot more if they are not feeling personally threatened by it, being accused of being a racist or whatever.

There is an assumption here that anti-racist professional development means accusing teachers and threatening them. Mr. Chow confirmed this attitude and explained that teachers prefer sessions that focus on immigrants' cultures: "for example they [teachers] want me to present a PowerPoint to their staff, and say okay, let's learn something about Chinese culture."

All participants expressed that teachers prefer the "celebratory" stance towards other cultures in their Pro-Ds; for instance, Mr. Chow said:

Oh well, I think... I think the teachers themselves... will demonstrate how they... approach these festivals, celebrations or events in a very positive attitude. They always approach it with a very positive attitude... that means happy; it's a celebration... always with a very welcoming attitude... so they themselves demonstrate a very positive attitude.

The representative of Teachers' Association, Ms. Taylor, argued that teachers do not need to be educated about antiracism; she explained that

no one has brought it up as a need. Usually, if that is a need, then someone will email me and say 'can I please present on anti-racism?' and I will say 'great, we'll make space for you,' but no one has brought that up as a need in their school.

All participants focused on teachers' autonomy and how the school district and the teachers association are doing what teachers want to do. All participants explained that teachers are challenged by "cultural diversity" and they explained that the teachers' priority is to deal with issues related to urgent matters which are part of their duties as professionals. Solomon (1995) explains that "any critical interrogation of structures for transformative possibilities appears to fall outside what teachers perceive as their professional mandate" (p.

251). Teachers professionalism is most of the time related to curriculum and assessment. This is because “the culture of pragmatism dissuades deeply theoretical or philosophical discourses among educators in favor of discourses focused on immediate, practical strategies and resources” (Gorski, 2008, p. 521). This discourse propelled a culture of apolitical education and neutral teachers. As Mr. Brown explained,

seeing multiculturalism as more than just an ethnic diversity issue, and it has to do a lot more with what are some core values, what are some similarities and differences, but the moment you get into that you really step into political water and a lot of teachers rightly so are afraid to go there because you will anger some parents and who need that, who needs somebody yelling at you at the end of the day, so it’s just easy to focus on reading and writing.

Mr. Brown stated that encouraging teachers to move beyond the food, dance and festivals perspective is “a challenge.” He contended

the challenges are to encourage teachers to remember that part of social responsibility and in some way to celebrate that without limiting it just to food folks and fun, superficial, shallow event, so like you know, for example in this

community a lot of people celebrate Chinese new year here, like off day thing, people can go to an event as a multicultural celebration and say isn't that wonderful and then get back in their car and complain about Chinese drivers, so no changes occur but just reinforcement of stereotype, it's also a superficial understanding, so we have to be careful about those kinds of celebrations, sometimes they can do more harm than good.

This attitude is in line with the research findings of Rizvi and Crowley (1993), Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996), and Solomon (1996) who contend that teachers' attitudes played a significant role in the failure of schools to respond effectively to the challenges of diversity. Through their observations and studies, the above authors found that teachers' attitudes, beliefs and subjectivity might be antagonistic to a critical approach to multiculturalism because it confronts them with their biases, subjectivities and privileges. Solomon (1995) argues after conducting a large-scale research where more than 1000 teachers from five school jurisdictions across Canada completed surveys, and fifty of them were interviewed, that "teachers manifest and show resistance to in-service initiatives on multicultural and anti-racist education" (p. 254). One decade later, Knight and Wiseman (2005) confirmed that teachers who are "predominantly White, English speaking, middle class" (p. 389), coming to the profession with a Eurocentric dominant view of the world and with little or no education in multicultural

issues are incapable of responding to the current local and global challenges that impact their classrooms (Sleeter, 2008). That's why "the greatest difficulty in multicultural teacher education is helping teachers to want to challenge structures and processes that benefit themselves" (Sleeter, 1992, p. 40). Bickmore (2005) argues that teachers largely avoid more difficult approaches because their own background, preparation and opportunities for professional development have not provided them with the tools needed (p. 3).

Participants had a consensus that teachers are autonomous professionals and the choice of their Pro D lies in their hands, and they all confirmed that controversial issues such as anti-racist education and social justice oriented issues are not popular subjects in Sunrise schools. However, few school districts in BC, especially in the Greater Vancouver area, showed a strong initiative to implement and support anti-racism and social justice programs (see Gill & Chalmers, 2007).

4.4.3.3. "There is a major denial in the system"

There is an attitude of denial concerning multicultural education. This attitude is not only a result of educators' personal attitudes, but it also demonstrates the failure of the whole system to move beyond liberal multiculturalism. Mr. Brown confirmed that

there's denial, there's sort of a color blindness in a very negative kind of context...in the sense that I don't have to

acknowledge this so I will keep talking about...like a really good example is teachers write very long lengthy report cards and they are trying to do their best and they put way too much effort into it and they write these long (long) essays and they are not acknowledging that in many cases parents are not able to read it, so there's this kind of, ...I don't know why it's occurring.

This statement shows that despite the three decades of multicultural education in the Sunrise school district, teachers are still unable to adjust their teaching and communication strategies to deal effectively with the demographic changes, Mr. Brown's critical statement highlighted that little was achieved in Sunrise school district, in terms of enhancing teachers' multicultural competencies. Teachers are still working through ways that disregard the reality of their classrooms. This finding supports the literature that argues that neither teachers' pre-service nor their in-service education could challenge their Eurocentric education. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), Jenks and colleagues (2001), Lund (2006b), Vilegas-Reimers (2003), Solomon (1995) contend that the lack of major reforms to change the structures, the policies and the organizational culture limited the success of professional development programs and deepened the gap between what teachers are taught and the day-to-day challenges of their classrooms. Teachers are ill-prepared to teach diverse

population and the whole education system is in a state of “denial”. Despite the rhetoric of equality, social justice and equitable public schooling “schools too often operate in ways that undermine [democracy]. Overly narrow (e.g., Eurocentric) curricula and various other institutional practices – standardized testing, ability grouping and tracking, in-grade retention, repeated failure, suspension, and expulsion – selectively discourage, stigmatize, and exclude young people from school. Both inside and outside schools, societal inequalities based on class, race, gender, sexual identity, and ability place further limits on actually existing democracy” (Kelly, 2003, p. 124).

What is surprising in Mr. Brown’s statement, is that contrary to the School District statements about its outstanding success in enhancing multicultural education and its achievement in supporting an inclusive policy that works for all students, this school district leader reveals that so many teachers in the school district are not even aware of the implications of the demographic changes and the necessity to transform not only their attitudes, but also their teaching, and cross-cultural communication skills with their students and the parents. Mr. Brown contended that the whole system is not supporting a multicultural education that would transform teachers’ beliefs and practices. “There’s a major denial in the system both at the university level and in school districts and it’s not restricted at this district; it’s a general denial.”

So, there is systemic support for teacher avoidance of uncomfortable issues related to multiculturalism. Mr. Brown extends the blame to universities:

Well, we'll step back a second and look at pre-service and the realization from what I gather is that ESL may be a workshop one afternoon, multiculturalism might even be embedded in that workshop or might be another workshop and I and my colleagues have argued for many years now that the universities here should really be providing some significant time to provide some ESL pre-service instruction and some multiculturalism-diversity instruction so that new teachers coming out can better support the kids that are sitting in front of them and universities seem to be very reluctant to move this further up the agenda and I strongly feel that there needs to be more time devoted to providing ESL instruction and a greater understanding of living in a diverse multicultural society.

He accuses universities of failing to deliver a pre-service multicultural education able to help teachers teach students from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. He shares this attitude with many scholars (Lund, 2006; Sleeter 2002), who confirm that universities didn't transform pre-service education and didn't prepare teachers for increasing diversity. Mr. Brown echoed several

scholars who argue that most of today's teachers are ill-prepared to deal with diversity, and challenge the existing inequities (Kelly, 2001; Merryfield, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Rizvi and Crowley, 1993; Sleeter, 1992; Solomon and Levine-Rasky, 1996). Within academic research, there is a broad consensus that pre-service teacher education is still framed from a traditional paradigm that focuses on skills and a Eurocentric view of the world knowledge.

The school district participants, Mr. Brown, Ms. Smith, and Mr. Chow, and the teacher association representative, Ms. Taylor, emphasized that professional development should be conducted from a “positive” and a “non-threatening” perspective. Ms. Smith argued that “in terms of the professional development, it underlies all that we do: discrimination – anti-discrimination, and anti-racism. But I think sort of putting it on a more positive note.” In the Canadian context, anti-racism is often criticized as being a term that is too harsh in Canada because there is a “reluctance to acknowledge structural and individual forms of racism, which contradict our image as fair people” (McMahon & Armstrong, 2003, p. 256). This confirms that these programs, including multicultural student clubs, service learning opportunities, and staff development workshops are detached from a contextual understanding of equity and justice, and hence they tend to recycle biases and inequities (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gorski, 2006; Nieto, 2000).

In fact, the teacher association shares the same “celebratory” perspective of multicultural education and shares the same vision of the school district. Contrary to the literature about the teacher associations in BC and the BC Teachers’ Federation critical stance and social justice advocacy, the teacher association in Sunrise school district seems to hold to a liberal perspective that doesn’t go beyond “food, dance and dress”, an attitude that “conservatize[s] multicultural education” (Gorski, 2006, p. 167). Among the five participants, Mr. Brown was very critical of the situation of Multicultural education in the Sunrise school district. His attitude highlights “multiculturalism is one little bit of that,” and a quick fix to deal with the “problem” of the immigrant students’ linguistic and cultural background.

4.5 Purpose of multicultural education in the school district

This section responds to the last research question:

What do the data suggest about the purpose(s) that undergird professional development in relation to multicultural education within the school district?

The “celebratory” multicultural education in the Sunrise School District reflected how the participants see the purpose of multicultural education in the school district and what aim multicultural education should pursue. The participants’ views are significant, because of their leadership roles in the school district and in the teachers’ professional development.

The following themes emerged:

4.5.1. Facing the challenges of ESL student population

The definition of multiculturalism is related to current patterns of immigration and the “challenges” they create. This idea of multiculturalism as a “challenge” was emphasized by all participants, and these challenges are mainly “linguistic” and “cultural.” According to the participants, multiculturalism raises challenges related mainly to ESL which create imperatives for professional development. Ms. Caitlyn states that “for several years... we have a huge wave of immigration and so that changed our district dramatically, into an ESL district, and the need to development multicultural competencies.”

Ms. Taylor explained how multicultural education is existent in the school district because of ESL: “Well, it’s more challenging, the more multicultural your class is, and also the more ESL students you have it impacts, because you need to make things understandable for a very many, number of children.”

The information gathered from the school district documents and interviews demonstrates that there is a stated idea that multicultural education is about the “Other”; and the “Other” refers to the immigrants coming from a non-western origin and who are mainly ESL students. In Sunrise school district,

multiculturalism is always connected to ESL. Ms. Smith , the coordinator of ESL and multiculturalism, explains that there is a close connection between the two:

the term multiculturalism, can describe the background of all our students... and then the ESL, the term ESL, explains the term for our students that speak English as another or an additional language in the home. And so... but the majority of students are ESL, and come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Similarly, Ms. Caitlyn emphasizes that multiculturalism is closely connected to ESL students, “the ESL led to the importance of multiculturalism, and now we’re trying to blend it, morph it into more of inclusion.” This statement indicates that “not speaking English” is the trigger for attention to multiculturalism since learning English would help assimilate the students in a Eurocentric schooling system. Because the demographics of the Sunrise school district have changed dramatically in the past few years, this led to more and more students who need language support; eventually, this led to the growing importance of ESL programs.

The close connection between ESL and multicultural education seems obvious when we look at the different activities and Pro-Ds conducted by the schools and the school district; for instance, Ms. Smith explains that her “role as

coordinator is multi-faceted, as you can imagine, but in terms of professional development there are key issues that come up and I can put them [teachers] in the right direction.” She adds that her role is to give advice and information to ESL teachers and is mainly to:

give that information to our administrative team and to our school trustees, so they can see the profile of who’s coming - how many students are coming, how many students are going... it very much affects staffing... ESL staffing.

Ms. Smith’s statement underscored the fact that the school district focuses on managing ESL student population and the fact that professional development in this area aims to respond to teachers’ overwhelming situation. As the Multiculturalism and ESL Coordinator, Ms. Smith provided mainly information about the ESL population and teaching techniques and activities to teach ESL students. This focus was clear in one of the Pro D sessions I attended as the whole session was about ESL resources, ESL assessment and ESL staffing. Participants in the session were only ESL teachers.

All the study participants agreed that the school district is an ESL district, as the number of “students for whom English is a second language are a growing segment of British Columbia’s K-12 school population. Since 1990, the number of students identified as needing ESL services in BC has more than tripled” (BC

Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 7). It is necessary to point out that Sunrise school district in BC has the largest number of ESL students in British Columbia.

However, multicultural education and ESL issues seem to be primarily the focus and the “responsibility” of ESL teachers. Contrary to the public propaganda of an outstanding success in ESL among the school district, a report (Sunrise school district , 2004) states that “the Board of School Trustees,[sunrise school board] expressed some concern when looking at last year’s FSA[Foundation Skills Assessment] results in Reading for ESL students. Specifically, the Trustees were wondering why in 2003, ESL students who scored similarly to their non-ESL peers in Grade Four, scored so much lower in comparison to their non-ESL peers in Grades Seven and Ten” (p. 2). This recognizes that there is an achievement gap between ESL students (immigrants) and non-ESL (native speakers of English), but also that this gap is widening with the years. One question is necessary to ask: Why is there an achievement gap? And why is it getting worse? Does this imply successful work with the immigrant students? Does this imply that teachers are coping with the diversity in their classrooms, and are they well prepared to help their students succeed and benefit from the current school system? Does this imply that the school district professional development and in-service education programs are effective and helping the disadvantaged students? Is attention to language proficiency enough? These are legitimate questions that need to be discussed.

4.5.2. “Harmonize cultures”

Data revealed that another purpose of multicultural education in the Sunrise school district is to create an image of harmony across cultures within the district.

All participants agreed that the aim of the school district as far as multicultural education is concerned is to adjust students to the “Canadian” culture and to adjust teachers to the students’ culture, the image of a raceless, harmonious school district is sometimes a major reason to ignore and deny the critical issues that exist in the Sunrise schools

An overwhelming presence of the terms, “celebration”, “tolerance”, “respect of other,” “cultures,” “acknowledge” was in all participants’ discourses. For instance the following statement by Ms. Smith highlights this attitude of acceptance and tolerance.

And so we have a belief that, and a respect and an acknowledgement, that we’re all co-existing together, and the we are a multicultural country, and that... that the view is that each cultural and linguistic background is such a resource, and that we should respect that we should use in all aspects of the community and in our education system.

All participants emphasized that the school district was working really hard on how to create school environment where all students would feel appreciated and accepted. Data from documents revealed that social responsibility was a theme of several Pro Ds in different schools, for instance, and according to Ms. Taylor:

Social responsibility is things like health education, drug education, substance abuse education... things like career planning... it's also things like teaching the kids empathy and tolerance, and respect, and fair-mindedness... so it's how to be a good citizen. And social responsibility is something that our district has spent a great deal of time promoting, and the counselors at the board office have taken a great deal of time to come to schools to teach kids social responsibility also.

From the school district's leaflets and brochures, it was clear that there was a concern about issues of racism, bullying, name calling, stereotypes, and also it was clear that the school district is making an effort to raise awareness . Different leaflets and brochures were displayed and all leaflets were translated into several languages and were given to parents and students. However, there was a clear absence and avoidance of connecting social responsibility to anti-racism and anti-discrimination. This denial in the Sunrise School District seems to reflect a general denial in the Canadian education system that still embraces a

version of multiculturalism that is restricted to “festivals featuring saris and samosas.” This approach aims to reach cultural “harmony,” a harmony that hides a lot of inequities; this approach “does not build critical knowledge of racialized power and privilege in society, which is a necessary base for understanding and combating any form of oppression. Liberal multicultural approaches to diversity can therefore mask inequality under the guise of superficial cultural pluralism” (Zine, 2004, par. 12).

4.6. Unpacking neoliberalism in relation to multicultural education and the purpose of education

In all interviews, the participants talked about multicultural education in the school district without referring to the socio-political context of the Sunrise school district. Even when Mr. Brown expressed a critical attitude and argued that “there is a denial in the whole system;” he didn’t provide an explanation of the factors and the forces that inhibit in-service multicultural education. When asked about the reasons, he just said “I don’t know why.”

Discussing teacher multicultural education in the Sunrise school district revealed that the marginalization, the limited attention paid to multicultural education in the school district and the absence of anti-racism and social justice debate are a reflection of an ideology that advocates that these issues are not part of “education.” For instance, Mr. Brown explains his perception of education and schools by contending that:

the whole idea of schools being a place for kids to learn to read and write has shifted somewhat into being more of a place for kids going to do everything including getting a proper meal, having physical activity, learning not to be bullies, learning to get along with other people, and you can go on and on and on...multiculturalism is one little bit of that, so teachers are saying like our district what are our goals for this year, well the goals in this district are literacy and social responsibility, you can say that social responsibility has a multicultural component to it, but a lot of people would say it is more important to deal with bullying.

Mr. Brown's statement shows his definition of education and that the primary purpose of education and schools is to teach kids how to read and write; he explains how schools are assuming responsibilities that they shouldn't assume, and presents an instrumental view of schools that comes from the neoliberal ideology, which currently dominates the education sector. "In accordance with neo-liberal philosophy, public welfare will be a by-product of economic prosperity. Education is perceived as a means to achieve economic prosperity, not an end in itself. Vocationalism figures quite prominently since the primary emphasis is on basic education, especially literacy, and considerable emphasis goes to career planning and preparation. Education is perceived to be a

commodity to be bought and sold, parents and students are perceived to be consumers of educational services, and schools and school districts are perceived to be suppliers marketing educational services and academic achievement credentials” (Poole, 2007, par. 74) . This ideology had a great impact on education policies, resource allocation, teachers’ autonomy and eventually multicultural education. From a neoliberal perspective, multicultural education programs are costly and irrelevant. Teachers, time, and all resources should be allocated to create a competitive workforce able to compete in global economy. The teacher association representative in the Sunrise School District presents a similar opinion; she confirms that:

Well, in this district, professional development is aligned very much with school goals. And the school goals in most school focus on math, literacy, social responsibility... and there’s a fourth one, but I can’t remember what it is. And these goals drive the professional development at the schools. So each school, based on their school goal, would – say it’s literacy – then their professional development days would be literacy based. Now if there are needs in the school with regard to multiculturalism, so the greater issues – math, literacy, social responsibility – seem to be taking over from the teacher-driven ones, which may be multiculturalism.

It was perhaps surprising to hear a representative of the teachers' association advocate a pragmatic and instrumental purpose of schooling. Her local is a member of the BCTF, a teachers' associations known for its resistance to the neo-liberal agenda that has dominated schools, especially with the coming of the liberal government in 2001. Contrary to Ms. Taylor's attitude and the advocacy of this neo-liberal perspective, the BCTF emphasizes the importance of education in the achievement of social justice and personal development (Poole, 2007; Ungerleider & Krieger, 2009).

All participants emphasized the need to focus on students' academic achievement; disregarding the reality that not all students have the same opportunities because they do not come with the same "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986), consequently, teachers are required to achieve the school goals, which are usually focused on pragmatic and urgent issues and ignore how multiculturalism entails a more complex reality than Chinese food, Indian weddings and Muslim faith. Mr. Brown stated that "that's the reality, it's driven by pragmatism...and important but not urgent tends to get pushed further down the priority list."

This pragmatic vision is not unique to the Sunrise School District; it has been the force that dominated education globally. It reflects a neoliberal and neoconservative social imaginary that perceives education in terms of efficiency, outcomes and performance, and educational reforms that would turn schools

into engines for the larger economy, run by a strict set of regulations summarized in privatization, accountability and standardization (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006), explain the manifestation of neo-liberal ideology in education reforms as “the streamlining of school services through budget cuts, adoption of province-wide standardized testing, rewritten mandatory curricula with a focus on a profusion of fragmented learning outcomes, the cutback of teacher development support and preparation time, and the vast reduction in structures that enable local participation in school governance” (p. 111)

As education becomes increasingly marketized “profit-making becomes the defining measure of responsibility, and consumption is the privileged site for determining value between the self and the larger social order” (Giroux, 2003, p. 150). With the liberal government in BC, this neoliberal ideology became dominant, and it was clear that “liberals push boards to market education...The B.C. Liberal government is reshaping public education through privatization and a market approach to education. A number of policies put in place will have a profound impact on public education in the long term” (BCTF, 2002, p. 1). Neoliberal policies have an impact on multicultural education because it is costly. The BCTF explained that “significant changes have occurred in the B.C. education system, which may affect educational programs offered to students with special needs and ESL students. The changes include: Increased class size

and no limits or restrictions on class composition, removal of high-incidence targeted funding and other provincial government funding decisions, the abolition of the Ministry of Education Special Programs Branch, increased part-time employment in schools cuts to other government areas affecting families of students with special needs and removal of ratios resulting in fewer specialist support/ resource teachers” (BCTF, 2002, p. 6).

Within this framework that perceives education from cost efficiency, profit, and vocational perspectives, multicultural education is a waste of time and resources. Indeed, the current socio-economic and political context has adopted a neoliberal vision that commodifies multiculturalism (Gilbert, 2007) and uses the rhetoric of “Canadian multiculturalism” to market the “skills, talents, ethnic backgrounds of men and women are commodified, marketed and billed as trade enhancing” (Abu-Laban & Gabriel (2002, p. 12). The current situation of multiculturalism emphasizes the value of diversity to international business links and Canada’s global competitiveness. In this context the values of hierarchy, materialism, competition, and excessive individualism are glorified as they become the defining parameters for successful educational organizations and concepts like multicultural education, social justice and teachers’ learning; education and professional development become irrelevant and inappropriate. This “corporate” rationale plays a defining role in how education is perceived, how schools are run, and how teachers fulfill their mission.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research project examined multicultural education in in-service teacher professional development in one urban school district in the province of British Columbia. By conducting a comprehensive document analysis and using semi-structured interviews, I intended to bring to light the perspectives of school district staff involved in professional development and to critically examine teacher professional development in the Sunrise school district. I sought to fill a gap in the current educational research in order to highlight the importance and the necessity to explore and analyze in-service multicultural education. Given the limitations of the study, the findings of this investigation are exclusive to the sample studied. However, external transferability to similar settings at least within the context of British Columbia is not ruled out. The situation of professional development in the Sunrise school district is not unique, but it reflects the situation of many school districts in BC and in Canada in general.

My research revealed that according to the School District participants and the Teacher Association participant the “celebratory” approach to multicultural education was the dominant theoretical perspective in the Sunrise School District. Within this framework, the school district initiatives were quite successful in “celebrating the other cultures,” especially with the implementation

of the BC Settlement Workers In Schools program since 2007. The focus of the school district on ESL, the use of cultural interpreters to enable teachers to communicate with parents and translating documents into different languages are indications of the school district commitment to bridge the cultural gap between teachers/schools from one side and students/parents from the other side.

However, despite the growing cultural diversity that characterizes the school district population and three decades of official multicultural policy in Canada, it was surprising to find out that, apart from Mr. Brown, the other four participants presented a limited understanding of multiculturalism and multicultural education; they articulated perceptions that reified culture and multiculturalism and limited multicultural education within the celebratory approach of food, dance and festivals. The discourses and practices of in-service multicultural education were limited to ESL and to non-western immigrant students' cultures. The organization and the content of multicultural education curriculum seem to lack a clear conceptual framework, planning and financial support. In the Sunrise School District multicultural education is NOT the multicultural education that Nieto (1996) defined as antiracist education, basic education, important for all students, pervasive, education for social justice, and based on critical pedagogy (Nieto, 1996).

It was also surprising to find out that none of the participants shared the same organizational culture regarding multicultural education. For instance, the school district leaders who participated in the study didn't articulate the same definition of multiculturalism as it is stated in the official documents of the Ministry and the school district, and they evaluated the effectiveness of multicultural education program in the district from different perspectives. Ms. Smith and Ms. Caitlyn seemed to be satisfied with the work done with teachers as far as multicultural education; they think that "emails, resources, few workshops that happen in a conference every two years" are quite sufficient to help teachers and educate them. However, Mr. Brown, who has been involved in multicultural education for more than twenty five years in the school district, seemed to be more critical of the current situation; he acknowledged that what the school district is doing is not enough. He extended his criticism to the "whole education system." The three school district leaders didn't share the same attitude about how efficient multicultural education is, and they didn't seem to have a clear "district vision" of how multicultural education can be improved. The different perspectives provided by the participants, which emanated from their different roles, experiences and subjectivities, showed the complex nature of multicultural education.

It is important to note that there was a clear discrepancy between how multicultural education is presented in the official documents of the BC ministry

of education and the practices in the Sunrise school district. Also the same discrepancy is noticed between the discourse of multiculturalism and multicultural education and the perspectives of multicultural education in the school district as perceived by the leaders that I interviewed about professional development in this area. This point indicates that school administrators often demonstrated inconsistencies in their professed perceptions and actual multicultural education practices (Grant & Sleeter, 2007).

There was, also, a prevailing assumption among the participants that education is and should remain neutral and apolitical; this perspective has an impact on how the school leaders perceive the purpose of multicultural education and teachers' role in the school system.

Although all participants talked about a strong commitment to support diversity and promote multicultural education, this support is rather superficial as multicultural practices are limited to a celebratory perspective, which is still unable to respond to the challenges of diversity in all its forms. There was a clear attitude of "denial" and absence of critical and transformative discourses in multicultural education. Celebratory multiculturalism silences controversial issues of discrimination based on race, class, sexual identity and depoliticizes schools. Critical issues are considered harmful and out of school concern; critical perspectives are feared because they would disturb the system and shake a long history of mainstream culture that privileges a Eurocentric view.

The above mentioned findings of this small-scale study are important and highlight the necessity to pursue this line of inquiry. I recommend that more studies should focus on this area of research and that in-service professional development programs should be explored, analyzed and evaluated from a critical perspective. It is important to explore the existing professional development programs and how they help teachers be culturally responsive to the diversity in their classrooms. Engaging in critical analysis of how teachers are educated about diversity and how they are supported in their schools to address the issues related to diversity is an urgent need for school districts, teachers' associations, policy makers, politicians, and academics. Critical analysis is necessary as a means to examine how schools participate (or not) in the democratization of our society and to transform teachers from technicians to activists. Teachers in the present global and local situation are challenged by a growing diversity and education policies that undermine their roles as agents of change and transformation.

Given the findings of this research, it is important to point to the necessity that the school district assumes a responsibility in teachers' professional development. This study recommends that the school district should rethink multicultural in-service education. It should be considered a key component and a top priority of education reforms because of the growing diversity in the school district and also because multicultural education can play a significant role to

help teachers rethink their mission and examine their practices *vis-à-vis* the growing diversity among their student population and the local and global pressures that impact education.

This study highlights that within this complex context of diversity in Canada teachers need professional development and in-service education that would transform not only their teaching techniques, but would challenge their biases and help them critically examine their attitudes and their perceptions of themselves, their students and the whole school system. Teachers' multicultural education programs should be transformed from crisis oriented programs to programs planned and organized to engage teachers in a self-reflective process, where they problematize teaching, develop personal and professional attitudes, skills and strategies that allow them to teach across lines of ethnicity, race, language, and social class and to bridge the cultural divide between themselves and their students. Teacher multicultural education is crucial to help teachers move beyond tolerance and respect for diversity to engage in transforming the status-quo and question inequities. When teachers are educated and supported to be critical, they can go beyond the celebration of cultures. This depends on the willingness of school districts, teachers associations and schools to engage teachers in a professional development process that would help teachers scrutinize and reflect upon their own teaching behaviour and that "explicitly directs and supports schools in designing curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, and

organizational structures that are continuously responsive to, and reflective of, student diversity” (Skerret, 2008, p. 275). It is a long process that challenges the educators’ subjectivities and views education and teaching as political.

This dimension in teachers’ multicultural education can’t be achieved without a strong commitment from the leaders in school districts to rethink their Pro D programs and to move beyond the tokenistic, celebratory approach. This study, then, emerges as a response to the cultural, social, and political contexts that avoid and ignore discussions about issues of race, culture, color and religion, and how they intersect with one’s opportunities and life chances.

This research recommends also that there is a need to rethink the role of universities and academia in this debate and in bridging the gap between theoretical research and practice. Research in multicultural education should extend beyond pre-service to link teachers pre-service and in-service programs. There should be more collaborative initiatives from universities with the school districts to support teacher in-service education and to engage in enhancing teachers’ professional development. These initiatives should also involve the educational leaders in the school district and help them rethink their roles in relation to multiculturalism and diversity from a social justice perspective.

Despite the critiques of the educators and districts as part of this study it must be recognized that although some of the work may not be as critical as

needed to push the boundaries and transform inequities, it is hopeful to know that initiatives are being undertaken in a good direction with good intentions. It must also be recognized that this work is challenging work involving many systemic and structural barriers and often with little institutional support. However, highlighting the challenges should not absolve one of the responsibility for change. Rather, it is crucial to honour the attempts of critical scholars and educators who believe that “teaching for social justice is possible even within the current constraints and prevailing power dynamics” (Kelly, 2012, p. 151) and who try to move teachers’ pre-service and in-service beyond the technical and the skill-oriented education and to advocate for social justice as a framework (see Brandes & Kelly, 2000, 2010; Gill & Chalmers, 2007). These initiatives demonstrated that teacher activists, need continuous support as they are challenged by institutional barriers, they are undermined and excluded. Hence it is important to enhance collaborative strategies to keep these teachers motivated to work for social justice and committed to an equitable school system.

Further research that would delve in exploring this issue in a comparative study within the province of British Columbia and across the different provinces should be conducted. It is through research and thoughtful explanation of the reality of things that a new discourse might emerge to move beyond the celebratory paradigm and to advocate a more critical, transformative and social justice oriented approach in teachers’ in-service education.

“Good intentions are not enough to address the fundamental changes required as Canadian education edges into the next century. Words must be backed by meaningful deeds and action” (Dei & James, 1998, p. 92). This research substantiates the fact that policies, discourses and rhetoric of multiculturalism are not enough; without action that embraces a critical, transformative paradigm, Canadian schools won’t be able to challenge the fundamental existing inequities.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A/Introductory questions

1. What is your current position in the school district?
2. How long have you been involved with professional development in the school district?

B/ Identifying multiculturalism .

3. Can you describe the student demographics of the schools in this school district? What cultures are represented and in what proportions?
4. When the term ‘multiculturalism’ is used within the school district what does it refer to, or what does it mean specifically? Are there other terms used that might express similar or related ideas? If so, what are they? What distinctions do you make among these terms?
5. Does the school district connect multiculturalism to ESL? If so why? To what extent?

C/ Professional development.

6. How does ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity impact teachers’ work? And how does it impact your work in professional development?
7. In your view, what role does professional development related to multiculturalism play in an increasingly diverse school setting?
8. How many professional development events do you think focus essentially on issues related to multiculturalism during a school year?

9. Who are involved in these professional development events? Who are the presenters and who are the attendees? Are they compulsory for teachers? Do the school district staff attend these events?
10. What kinds of issues are integrated and discussed in teachers professional development that is developed to address issues of multiculturalism?
11. Do they address issues of anti-racism, racial discrimination, immigrant cultures? Why or Why not?
12. What theoretical perspectives/ researchers inspire your work?
13. What challenges do you encounter in your role (as a facilitator of teachers professional development that addresses issues of multiculturalism) / in relation to multiculturalism?
14. What, in your view, would improve and facilitate Pro-D that deals with multiculturalism?