Two School Administrators’ Perspectives on How Intercultural Education is Promoted in Their Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined the perspectives of 2 elementary school administrators (1 principal of a faith-based school, and 1 vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. A generic qualitative research methodology guided this study. Face-to-face interviews that used a guide with open-ended questions were used to collect data. Participants were administrators in their respective schools, had been involved in intercultural activities at their school, and were professional acquaintances of the researcher. The interviews were digitally recorded and the interview transcripts were reviewed by participants to ensure accuracy. The administrators’ understanding of intercultural education tended to be limited to learning and celebration of various cultures. The intercultural education strategies used in the respective schools focussed on developing a knowledge base and provided limited intercultural interaction. The public school had greater resources available than the private faith-based school. However, the resources were not always used to facilitate intercultural education. Teachers and administrators were provided with very few professional development opportunities focussed on intercultural education.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. The motivation for conducting this study came from two sources. One, from the need identified in the literature, and the other from the need that I saw in the school that I administer.

I administer a faith-based school in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in which most of the students are from the same ethnic group and observe the same faith. I have observed this homogeneity at other private faith-based schools that I visited in the GTA. The lack of cultural diversity in my school was of concern to me as the school administrator because my school is situated in a geographical region where “49.97% of the population in Toronto is foreign born” (Kopun & Keung, 2007) and I wanted to ensure that students who attend my school develop Delors’s (1996) fourth pillar of learning, “learning to live together” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 7) and to become interculturally competent. For this reason, this study inquired into how intercultural education was understood and promoted in one private faith-based elementary school and in one public elementary school in the GTA. The two school environments, faith-based school and public school were studied to provide a contrast in the extent of diversity of the student population that could potentially impact the administrators’ perspectives towards intercultural education and the manner in which they implemented it in their respective schools.

This chapter introduces the study. It provides a background of my school, discusses the context of the study, presents the research question and subquestions,
summarizes the current status of research on intercultural education, discusses the importance of the study, and outlines its scope and limitations. The chapter ends with an outline of the remainder of this document.

Background

My interest in intercultural education evolved out of my role as the founder and administrator of my school, a private Montessori school that also provides ethnic languages and faith instruction. The school opened in 2007 in a strip plaza in the city of Brampton, Ontario. It started with five students in one Montessori Casa bambini (Casa) program for children aged 3 years to 6 years. Initially, the school provisioned for a student capacity of 24 students and it obtained a Child Care license because in Ontario for a school to accept students younger than 4 years of age a Child Care license is a legal requirement. For our license for 24 students, 3 teachers were hired initially, and by mid-2008, the school reached its licensed capacity. In 2009, a Montessori Elementary classroom was added for Grades 1 through 6 and in 2011, a classroom for toddlers of ages 18 months to 3 years was also added. The school’s student enrolment grew from 5 students in 2007 to 55 students in 2012. My school still operated in the same location where it began at the time of this study. While I was still the only administrative member, owner, and principal, the teaching staff grew from 3 teachers in 2007 to 7 teachers in 2012. The school is registered as a for-profit private school and the only source of funding is the tuition paid by parents.

The two key identities of this school are captured in the first two letters of the school’s name. The first, K stands for Khalsa, a word used in ancient times for "property
which belongs to the emperor directly” (Wikipedia, n.d.). In the context of the Sikh faith, Khalsa refers to a thing or person that belongs directly to God. Thus, this is a school that includes faith education in its curriculum. Every student at my school is taught his or her parental faith and ethnic language in addition to the Montessori curriculum which is taught in English. The school provided faith education that reflects the parents’ choice of religion. Therefore, my school is not a single faith school and provides education in keeping with the beliefs of the Sikh, Hindu, and Jehovah’s Witness faiths. Additionally, there were also some parents who had chosen to have their children opt out of faith education.

The second key identity of my school was that it is a Montessori school which is represented in the second letter in the school’s name, M. Montessori education originated in Italy in 1907 when Dr. Maria Montessori opened “a child care center for the children of desperately poor families in the San Lorenzo slums of Rome” (The Montessori Group, n.d.). Montessori observed how children learn best and “[b]y testing new approaches and materials and noting children’s reactions, over the next 50 years[,] Dr. Montessori developed a radically different system of education” (Lillard, 2008, p. 18). To illustrate how the Montessori education is different, Lillard explains:

Rather than being modeled on the factory, a Montessori school seems more like a miniature and eclectic university research laboratory. Montessori children pursue their own projects, just as do researchers in their laboratories. Like university researchers, children choose what they want to learn about, based on what interests them. They get lessons across the curriculum, which bears some
similarity to researchers going to colloquia or conferences to learn about new areas or techniques. The children talk with and collaborate with colleagues of their choosing. They pass on the fruits of their labors to others by giving talks to the class or other classes in their school and writing up papers. Thus, in Montessori, the child can be seen as a motivated doer in a research university, rather than as an empty vessel in a factory. (pp. 28-29)

To fully understand the details of the Montessori system, I completed the online Montessori training for students aged 3 to 6 years, with the North American Montessori Center (NAMC), before I opened my school in 2007. Montessori uses mixed age classrooms and allows the child to select his/her subject of study. Although the Montessori name is not legally protected, the Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators (CCMA) ensures that its member schools adhere to the requirements of Montessori education. For example, it ensures that teachers are Montessori certified, that the classrooms have a mixed-ages environment, and that the programs offered run 5 days a week. My school, from day one, has been a member of CCMA. Our commitment to Montessori was such that our new ethnic language and faith programs were also carefully designed to meet Montessori requirements - from materials for learning to creation of the environment and to the teacher directing the children’s learning. In April 2011, my school received formal accreditation with the CCMA.

The other regulating body that my school was legally licensed by was the Ministry of Education. The requirements that it must meet are detailed in the Day Nurseries Act (Service Ontario, 1990). In 2009, when we started our elementary (Grades
1 to 6) classroom, we also obtained the permission to operate a private school from the Ministry of Education. Both the childcare license and the permission to operate a private school are requested and approved every year. The Ministry representatives make unannounced visits to check on our childcare programs to ensure that we are complying with the Day Nurseries Act.

**Statement of the Problem Context**

Although the community in which my school is located has a very diverse community with “209 different ethnic origins” and where “89 languages were reported as being spoken” (Stats Canada, 2011), is predominantly attended by children of the Sikh faith whose parental ethnic language is Punjabi. The school also has some students whose parental ethnic language is Hindi or Tamil and they follow the Hindu faith. A couple of years before the time of this study, my school also had one student who followed the Jehovah’s Witness faith. Resource teachers for the ethnic languages and the religious faiths of the students visit weekly to tutor individual students. Students are given the option of observing the ethnic lessons in progress but participate only in the ones that their parents have chosen for them. The school is not reflective of the ethnic diversity of the community in which it is situated, even though as a matter of policy my school is open to all faiths and all ethnicities; open to the extent that the school provided each student with their specific faith and ethnic language training. Our recruitment drives were mostly run through online marketing tools and were always ethnic-neutral.

The incidental segregation that has occurred in my school prompted my concerns about the students’ lack of interaction with other cultural groups. This concern has been
noted in the literature. For example, Mason (2006) observes that “[f]aith-based schools pose major risks for future social cohesion by contributing to segregation and lack of understanding between religious (and non-religious) and ethno-religious groups” (p. 22). Although Mason’s observations reflect the context of schools in United Kingdom, and although his data are based on perceptions of politicians in public office and on discussions on online forums, they mirror my concerns as the principal of a faith-based private school. I am interested in intercultural education because:

   Intercultural education promotes the understanding of different people and cultures. It includes teachings that accept and respect the normality of diversity in all areas of life. It makes every effort to sensitize the learner to the notion that we have naturally developed in different ways. (Intercultural Education Network, n.d., para. 1)

Such understanding is relevant for students in my school.

Understanding others is also a fundamental part of 21st century learning. Delors (1996) identified learning to live together as one of the four pillars stating that:

   by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way. (p. 20)

Intercultural education is, thus, a key learning objective in the complex social mixes in public schools as well. Dealing and negotiating across cultural differences is a major skill
as argued by Lustig (2005): “[t]he ability to relate to and with people from vastly different cultural and ethnic backgrounds is an increasingly important competency both domestically and abroad” (as cited in Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 4). Even a decade earlier, with intercultural competence as a goal for IE, Lustig and Koester (1993) determined that “[s]tudents’ intercultural competence can be obtained through enhanced cultural awareness and cannot be excluded from the critical educational goals in our schools” (as cited in O’Neill, 2007, p. 208). Stier, Tryggvason, Sandström, and Sandberg (2012) advocated for introducing students to intercultural education as early as preschool. They stated that:

It has been shown that children are aware of ethnic and cultural differences at a very young age (Katz 1976; Aboud 1988; Flavell, Miller, and Miller 1993). Bernstein et al. (2000) have found that intercultural intervention programs for preschoolers enhance young children’s ability to classify individuals on multiple dimensions (i.e. age, gender, and race/ethnicity). They argue, therefore, that an integrated curriculum and a focus on young children’s abilities to categorize people on multiple dimensions will counteract the development of stereotypes. Similarly, Perkins and Mebert’s (2005) study shows that children in preschools with intercultural curricula have more domain-specific racial knowledge. (p. 286) Given this identification of need of intercultural education from preschool onwards, and given the lack of cultural diversity within my school, this study focused on how intercultural education could be effectively promoted in elementary schools by school administrators. Since implementing intercultural education requires strong
leadership support, this study focused on the perspectives of school administrators. Mitchell and Sackney (2009), from their research into high-capacity learning community schools, found that the learning environment “in every case, grew first from the school principal’s belief in and commitment to building people” (p. 65). Similarly in their research on effective approaches to foster intercultural education, Walton, Priest, and Paradies (2013) reported that “[s]even studies contend that teaching practice at the classroom level needs to be supported at a whole school level along with school leadership and administrative support” (p. 185).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. The large research question that guided this study was: What do administrators of two elementary schools in the GTA (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) understand intercultural education to be and how do they promote intercultural education in their schools?

Subquestions for this overall research question were:

1. How do administrators define intercultural education?
2. What is the importance that administrators attach to intercultural education in their schools?
3. What type of centralized support is provided to administrators to promote intercultural education in their schools?
4. What strategies do administrators identify they use to promote intercultural education (understanding) in their schools?

5. What strategies do administrators identify that teachers in their schools use to promote intercultural education?

6. What barriers to intercultural education do administrators identify?

Current Status of Intercultural Education

Considerable IE research and the various models and tools that have been developed for training in intercultural communication or to gain intercultural competence is documented in Deardorff (2009) and Witte and Harden (2011). However, the research they reported on is focussed on higher education and does not include a focus on primary or elementary education. Formal development of IE programs typically start with the recognition that “[m]ere contact is not sufficient to develop intercultural competence” (Allport, 1954, as cited in Deardorff, 2009, p. xiii). As the programs develop, they come to “focus on differences, diversity, and learning about others, attending solely to individual effort within micro contexts of classrooms and schools” (Shim, 2012, p. 209). Even then, there is still “no exact blueprint” (Cushner & Mahon, 2009, p. 304) for teachers and students for developing intercultural competence. Without a set curriculum, the task of intercultural education is left to individual teacher’s discretion. Toner (2010) reported that:

as a teacher, teacher educator and school leader in ACT[, Australian Capital Territory,] primary schools over a twenty-year period, it often seemed to me that most mainstream teachers rarely showed much interest in bringing the
experiences and ideas of different cultural groups into their classrooms beyond the celebration of special days. (p. 4)

Language teachers, however, have been delving into culture studies with a focus on developing communicative competence beyond just knowing the language as recognized by Manjarrés (2009) who reported that “it has for some time been accepted that communicative competence involves more than the mastery of a language’s grammar and lexis, and that the sociolinguistic and pragmatic components are an essential part of it” (p. 144).

A critical evaluation is important to make sure that intercultural education goes beyond just a knowledge approach. For example, while pedagogies and curriculum in Australian schools have been altered to provide intercultural knowledge, Tsolidis (2001) contends that cultural learning was merely “the mainstream learning about the marginal in order to better teach ‘them’ how to change and become like ‘us’” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 12). Halualani (2011) also calls for “critical intercultural perspective and practice” (p. 44). She defines this as “a stance through which students interrogate and question the conditions around which ‘culture’ is formed and intervene in its seamless production by articulating ‘what is absent’ and ‘what should be’” (p. 44). Halualani’s research advocated for a teaching where “culture is made real not by its own constitution but by the critical intercultural engagement that we employ while thinking about, analyzing, and discussing all matters related to culture” (p. 53).
Other than the list of skills and attitudes that are required for an individual to be ready for intercultural interactions, and teaching strategies, recent research has brought into focus environmental factors. Shim (2012) stated that:

Intercultural educators whose commitment is social justice must attend to larger conditions in which knowledge of self and others are produced and legitimized rather than focusing on the strategies, techniques, and the surface attitudes that are assumed to work in intercultural education. (p. 216)

Therefore, besides the focus on the individual learning for IE, educators must provide an environment that allows for opportunities to build and practice intercultural skills with a goal to recognize and act on issues of intercultural social justice.

The other concern with intercultural education is the preparation of educators for the task. Manjarrés (2009) observed that intercultural education “requires relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for intercultural encounters for which most teachers may not be prepared” (p. 145). She presented information that:

[a] study by Klein (2004) about teachers’ beliefs as regards culture and culture teaching showed that the participants in her study had a vague conceptualization of culture and of the relation between culture and language. For them culture learning meant basically knowledge of facts about the target culture and gains in tolerance and understanding. They considered culture learning as an automatic process, especially in immersion experiences. (p. 149)

These findings underline the need for teacher training for intercultural education.
Importance of the Study

The study could be useful to administrators and teachers in becoming better informed about strategies for fostering a whole-school approach to intercultural education. In their review of education literature on developing students’ intercultural understanding, Walton et al. (2013) reported that “[s]even studies contend that teaching practice at the classroom level needs to be supported at a whole school level along with school leadership and administrative support” (p. 185). Similarly, Kamp and Mansouri (2010), in their 3-year longitudinal study of constructing inclusive education, concluded that for a meaningful transformation in students, “schools need to work on a range of dimensions including their philosophy and structures; leadership and attitudes; resources and facilities; and partnerships and relationships” (p. 741). These authors did not specify the required support in each of these categories. This study, though limited in scope, aims to improve our understanding of administrative perspectives for implementing a whole-school intercultural education approach. This is important because we are living in a world that is becoming increasingly globalized.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study limited its scope to examining the perceptions of two elementary school administrators of schools located in the GTA. There was no attempt to verify whether or not the principals’ perceptions were supported by their actual practice. I did not go into the school to observe the actual practice in the school and I did not interview teachers, parents, or students to verify the data gathered. Additionally, the participants were selected on the basis of convenience, and therefore did not constitute a
representative sample. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews in May 2014 and analyzed in June 2014.

This study is limited by the methodology: one face-to-face interview with only 2 participants. This research was not intended to be generalized to a larger population, instead, it was intended to add to our understanding of how intercultural education is interpreted by 2 elementary school administrators, and how it is being implemented in their schools.

Outline of Remainder of the Document

Chapter Two provides a review of literature and is divided into four sections. In the first section, academic literature is reviewed for definitions of culture and intercultural education, and for learning outcomes related to intercultural education. In the second section, the importance of intercultural education given in the literature is reviewed. In the third section, recommendations directed around teaching strategies to deliver intercultural education are summarized. Finally, in the fourth section, literature on school leadership and administrators’ role in fostering intercultural education is reviewed.

Chapter Three details the appropriateness of using a generic qualitative research for this study, the rationale for conducting semi-structured open-ended interviews, the strategy for selection of participants, and the considerations for data collection, data analysis, and the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four begins with a section that provides background information on the participants who were interviewed. Following that are six sections that correspond with
the six subquestions of this research. Each of the sections on the subquestions provides a synthesis of data collected through the interviews.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the study followed by discussion on the data collected in the context of each of the six subquestions of research and concludes with the key findings of the study.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. The administrators’ perceived learning outcomes from intercultural education, the teaching strategies that teachers in their schools were adopting, and the leadership and administrative support that the administrators provide for fostering intercultural education are documented and compared. This chapter provides a review of literature and is divided into four sections. In the first section, academic literature is reviewed for definitions of culture and intercultural education, and for learning outcomes related to intercultural education. In the second section, the importance of intercultural education given in the literature is reviewed. In the third section, recommendations directed around teaching strategies to deliver intercultural education are summarized. Finally, in the fourth section, literature on school leadership and administrators’ role in fostering intercultural education is reviewed.

Defining Culture and Intercultural Education

The literature provided two types of definitions of culture: ones that view culture as a collection of characteristics and others that view culture as a system of processes. An example of the first type was Deardorff’s (2011) definition of culture as a list of “values, beliefs and norms held by a group of people” (p. 38). This was consistent with a view of culture as “the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group” (Eagleton, 2000, p. 34, as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 16). This definition of culture formed the basis of an intercultural education curriculum that
consists of “teaching big C culture (literary classics, works of art) and/or small c culture or the culture of the four Fs: foods, fairs, folklore, and statistical facts” (Kramsch, 1991, as cited in Manjarrés, 2009, p. 145).

The second type of definitions that view culture as a system of processes contended that culture is difficult to identify distinctly. For example, Kronenfeld (2002) noted that:

[C]ulture has no existence outside of our individual representations of it, and since these representations are variable, there exists no single place where the whole of any culture is stored or represented. Thus, culture is necessarily and intrinsically a distributed system. (as cited in Witte, 2011, p. 95)
A view of culture as a distributed system is also captured in Matsumoto’s (2000) definition of culture:

Culture is a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, beliefs, norms, and behaviors shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time. (as cited in Witte, 2011, p. 94)

Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) also viewed culture as a distributed system that has “enduring yet evolving intergenerational attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns into which people are born but that is structurationally created and maintained by people’s ongoing actions” (pp. 6-7). This evolving nature of cultures makes them “highly complex and dynamic configurations which contain inherent fractures and contradictions” (Witte & Harden, 2011, p. 2).
The approach to teaching or learning culture is affected by the definition of culture that an educator accepts. Toner (2010) observed that the difference is apparent from:

the relative emphasis given to cultural content or cultural learning processes.

Learning contexts that stress processes are likely to work on competencies more connected to ‘know how’ than to ‘knowledge’. This is reflected in the extent to which individuals are portrayed as enactors and creators of their own cultures rather than as recipients of their own culture and observers of other cultures. (p. 17)

The definition of culture affects the corresponding work of intercultural education as well. With the view of culture as a collection of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, Deardorff (2011) considered the work of intercultural education to be one that builds “effective and appropriate behavior and communication” (p. 38) for interacting with people of another culture.

When we adopt a view of culture that is dynamic and variable, we are less likely to treat the work of intercultural education as an acquisition of a whole but more as encounters with a “variety of cultural fragments” (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 17). Toner (2010) stated that “[w]e begin to be ‘intercultural’ when as a result of some kind of experience or interaction with other ways of being in the world we come to question what we know and expect” (p. 19). This implied that being intercultural is less about learning other cultures than it is about self-introspection to challenge the stereotypes that we unconsciously carry about other cultures. Liddicoat, Lo Bianco, and
Crozet (1999) described these stereotypes as “the cultural maps we hold in our minds to make sense of the world…which we often mistake as immutable truths” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 19). Toner (2010) summarized the definition of intercultural education as work that:

- encompasses encounters (interaction, dialogue, or experience) between people who see themselves as different from one another (diverse cultures), the dispositions and attitudes each person brings to the encounter (respect) and what comes out of it (shared cultural expressions, commonalities or connections). (pp. 19-20)

Implied in this definition is that the students must have awareness of their own culture. Manjarrés (2009) reports that

- most of the models [of building intercultural competence] developed seem to coincide in emphasizing the importance of learners’ awareness of own culture, an understanding of the relations between language and culture, and in providing insights into ways to explore, analyze and compare cultures. (p. 144)

The missing element from Toner’s (2010) definition is the need for a critical mindset. Halualani (2011) advocated for a “critical intercultural perspective and practice […] through which students interrogate and question the conditions around which ‘culture’ is formed and intervene in its seamless production by articulating ‘what is absent’ and ‘what should be’” (p. 44). This critical practice along with Toner’s definition above encompass the work of intercultural education.
Learning outcomes of intercultural education in higher education are compiled by Deardorff (2009) and Witte and Harden (2011). However, I was unable to find similar compilations for elementary education. It is from surveying the literature for intercultural teaching strategies that one may be able to deduce the outcome targeted by a particular strategy. In their research of intercultural education in practice by a number of language teachers, Byram, Nichols, and Stevens (2001) identified four themes around which the techniques are focused. First, they found that teachers use strategies that put “the emphasis on learners becoming aware of and analyzing the cultural phenomena of their own society as much as those of other societies” (p. 3). Second, teachers also emphasize “the development of skills of analysis and interpretation of unfamiliar social and cultural data from a foreign society” (p. 3). Third, they provided students “opportunities to collect data for oneself, either by stepping outside the classroom into the society in which learners live, or at a distance with the help of old and new technology” (p. 3). Fourth, teachers also use strategies to engage the students in “the use of literary texts to stimulate affective as well as cognitive understanding of otherness and the use of students’ literary imagination” (p. 3). These themes help get down to the learning outcomes being targeted.

In the third and fourth themes identified by Byram et al. (2001), students learn the skills and tools to act in intercultural situations. Blasco (2012) classified the intercultural abilities as:

- cognitive (facts and knowledge about other cultures),
- behavioral (how to act in intercultural situations),
- motivational/attitudinal (one’s orientation towards ‘otherness’), and
- emotional (the ability to understand why feelings arise in
intercultural situations, to monitor them as they occur, and to prevent them from
dictating behavior). (p. 477)

These abilities require skills, attitudes, as well as knowledge for interacting across diverse
cultural groups. Based on conceptual literature reviews, Walton et al. (2013) suggested
that the intercultural ability set:

- encompasses cultural awareness and knowledge including proficiency in another
  language, as well as the ability to effectively and appropriately interact with
  people from other cultures in a variety of contexts by drawing on interpersonal
  skills such as empathy, openness and flexibility, perspective-taking, reflexivity
  (meta-cognitive skills) and conflict resolution. (p. 181)

It is important to develop the interpersonal skills in practice of intercultural situations
developing cultural knowledge and awareness. Toner (2010) notes that:

- though empathy may be a desirable attribute in itself, in many circumstances it
  may amount to little more than feeling sorry for someone, a response as fleeting
  as the exposure to another’s pain. Ideally, in learning intended to strengthen
  intercultural understanding, empathy is not an end in itself but acts as a catalyst
  for critical analysis and action. (pp. 169-170)

Interpersonal skills developed in the context of intercultural interactions are a goal of
intercultural education.

Similarly, developing cultural knowledge and skills without work on attitudes
may not bring about long-term intercultural competence. Walton et al. (2013) reported
that “[r]esults from 16 studies indicate that only building cultural knowledge and cultural
awareness may result in positive short-term but not necessarily long-term changes in attitudes and behaviours” (p. 184). Also, that

[a]cross seven studies, it was found that only building cultural knowledge and cultural awareness can have little if any effect on attitudes or behaviours, and may even reinforce prejudices if students’ attitudes toward people from different cultural backgrounds are not explicitly addressed and thoughtfully discussed. (Walton et al., 2013, p. 185)

For intercultural education, therefore, raising awareness of another culture must also come with thoughtful discussion on attitudes towards differences.

The outcome apparent in the first two themes, identified by Byram et al. (2001) of self-awareness and development of cultural analytical skills, is getting the learners to be able to recognize where culture is in play. This means that learners are able to analyze any situation and identify the influence that culture brings to it. Blasco (2012) labels this as reflexive ability; that is, the “ability to reflect critically on own attitudes, assumptions, and behavior with a view to adjusting to a different cultural context” (p. 478). This requires self-awareness of own-cultural practices as well as other. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) describe self-knowledge as “the wisdom to know one’s ignorance and how one’s patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 57).

Blasco (2012) observes that this outcome of self-awareness is also targeted by work on “mindfulness which has recently gained prominence as one of the three dimensions constituting cultural intelligence” (p. 478). Thomas (2006) has described
mindfulness “as a metacognitive strategy involving heightened awareness and ongoing monitoring of one’s internal state, reactions, behavior, and external environment” (as cited in Blasco, 2012, p. 478). Critical pedagogy has inspired intercultural educators to extend the cultural mindfulness to also get “students to think critically about the power relations that permeate the social structures and value systems they move in” (Blasco, 2012, p. 478). Halualani (2011) proposed an outcome for intercultural education to develop a “critical intercultural perspective and practice […] through which students interrogate and question the conditions around which ‘culture’ is formed and intervene in its seamless production by articulating ‘what is absent’ and ‘what should be’” (p. 44), to not taking anything in front of us for granted (in terms of both the hidden and the obvious) and having the commitment to analyze issues of power that may touch upon our lives and those of others (p. 51). This requires an attitude of respect and empathy for all cultures; a sense of humility of not knowing the complete picture, of striving for synergy across cultures to discover new pathways for working together successfully. It also requires recognizing cultural differences, anticipating multiple culture-based viewpoints, and identifying the misrepresented, the suppressed, and the absent cultural viewpoints.

**Importance of Intercultural Education**

This section discusses the importance of intercultural education in this day and age and what has been observed about the importance it is being given in schools. In the *International Commission on Education for the 21st Century* report, Delores (1996) identified four foundations or pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Toner (2010) paraphrased the Report’s
emphasis on the fourth pillar thus: “Understanding others is considered to be fundamental to twenty-first century learning. In the complex global realities they inhabit, young people need to develop the knowledge, capabilities, dispositions and skills to appreciate the rich diversity of lives beyond their own” (p. 7). Taking this assertion further for Australian schools, Toner presented the case for positioning “intercultural education as part of the core curriculum arguing that in the context of a diverse, changing and uncertain world, social and intercultural capabilities should be considered essential elements in all students’ learning” (p. 1). North American scholars, Lustig and Koester (1993) argued that “[s]tudents’ intercultural competence can be obtained through enhanced cultural awareness and cannot be excluded from the critical educational goals in our schools” (as cited in O’Neill, 2007, p. 208). European scholars Stier et al.(2012) advocated for introducing students to intercultural education as early as preschool. They stated that:

It has been shown that children are aware of ethnic and cultural differences at a very young age (Katz 1976; Aboud 1988; Flavell, Miller, and Miller 1993). Bernstein et al. (2000) have found that intercultural intervention programs for preschoolers enhance young children’s ability to classify individuals on multiple dimensions (i.e. age, gender, and race/ethnicity). They argue, therefore, that an integrated curriculum and a focus on young children’s abilities to categorize people on multiple dimensions will counteract the development of stereotypes. Similarly, Perkins and Mebert’s (2005) study shows that children in preschools with intercultural curricula have more domain-specific racial knowledge. (p. 286)
Research, therefore, calls for integration of intercultural education in curriculum from preschool onwards.

However, Toner (2010), with reference to the Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education Report (2006), observed that: “[in] mainstream schools (particularly those with largely monocultural populations) this sort of work is generally not seen as a priority, with many schools and their teachers arguing that the curriculum is already seriously overloaded” (p. 12). The same Report found that faith-based schools are more motivated for intercultural interaction, with “the desire for interaction between schools most often comes from Islamic schools (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 12). Toner (2010) analyzed Australian government policy documents and school curriculums to report that “cultural diversity is generally met with good will and intentions in education, it is, nonetheless, given low priority in policy commitments and is treated superficially in most school programs” (p. 1). In other words, intercultural education has not yet made the transition from being considered a good thing to be included as a critical component of the curriculum.

**Intercultural Teaching Strategies**

Intercultural teaching in schools can happen any time there is an intercultural encounter in theory or practice. Toner (2010) contended that intercultural education occurs wherever and whenever students engage with other people and their lives. For this reason, an intercultural approach is as applicable in a science-based unit on
natural disasters, for example, as it is in a social science-based unit on families or a languages-based unit on celebrations (p. 21)

The first and foremost consideration for intercultural teaching strategies is that “being intercultural is an activity” (Byram, 2003, as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 23). This implies that in all intercultural teaching strategies, positive interaction must be at the heart of the learning. Through interaction, intercultural learning becomes a shared experience that brings knowledge and awareness into a practice that molds attitudes as well. Walton et al. (2013) reported that “[f]indings across 17 studies suggest that ICU [intercultural understanding] can be developed by making personal connections with individuals of different cultural groups in a supportive environment, and in ways that are meaningful and relevant to students’ lives” (p. 185). The importance of positive interaction is underscored by Abdallah-Pretceille’s (2006) caution that, "all teaching of cultures based around a selection of cultural facts risks being merely a takeover, a possession of the Other” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 51). Toner noted that when this takeover happens as in a pursuit of cultural facts without meaningful intercultural conversations, we are unable “to make connections between our own experiences and feelings and those of others” (p. 54). Appiah (2006) suggested that intercultural conversation should be conducted not just as “literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 3).

For building interaction into learning activities, teachers have to choose “content that portrays a range of perspectives and resources that make those perspectives accessible to students” (Toner, 2010, p. 55) and also provide “explicit opportunities to
interact with a range of people, and to participate in learning experiences in settings outside the school, to broaden and deepen their experiences and ways of seeing the world” (Toner, 2010, p. 187). In the following subsections, I present three categories of strategies: between schools, in classroom, and beyond classroom.

**Between Schools - Project Based Partnership**

A between school strategy occurs when classes from two or more schools work on a project and exchange their prepared materials. For example, Morgan (2001) facilitated an international partnership where the project was to “explore a particular cultural focus in depth, using both home and foreign cultures” (p. 11). The project started with the students exploring “their own cultural context” (p. 13). They then had to “present this cultural information in a format that would be accessible in the receiving classroom” (p. 13). Students encountered the other culture in such format that “each set of students both sent and received a package of materials focused on the same topic; these packages represented two different cultural approaches to the topic and were in different languages” (p. 13). A particular characteristic of this project was that the “students had much greater freedom than usual in a foreign language classroom because they were writing in their own language and choosing their own medium” (p. 13). This intercultural encounter was authentic as “the materials generated were truly authentic in that the communication was between students of roughly the same age, and the language and constructs being used were not ‘filtered’ through institutional media (the textbook or the teacher for example)” (p. 13). The teacher “acted as a facilitator in setting up the project, but did not decide on the content and format of the materials” (p. 13). Similar
projects may be structured to be school to school or classroom to classroom based and may “evolve into a long-term commitment to a project or program” (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 17).

**Between Schools - Partnership for Sharing**

Some schools form partnerships where students exchange emails, letters, and even visits. Some examples of effective practices in such partnerships are:

- “Students develop a class Web site to facilitate the exchange of information and discussion of issues relating to histories and identities of different nations” (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 23).
- “Students examine assumptions they may hold about the other country by completing a questionnaire on their ideas about the country. Students use teacher-prepared prompt sheets to focus their thinking and to help them analyze the sources of the assumptions they hold. With the help of their international partner school, they research and explore ways of life, environment and culture. They then redo the questionnaire and examine the changes in attitudes and perceptions they have experienced” (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 23).
- “Students help to organize and then participate in a virtual online videoconference that focuses on topics, themes and issues common to their curriculum and that of their international partner school” (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 23).
"Exchange visits, which focus on the exchange of cultural artifacts and the exploration of places and events that reflect cultural identities, are an integral component of partnerships that aim to build cultural awareness and understanding" (Alberta Education, 2008, p. 8).

Partnerships are made to create opportunities for intercultural interaction. An example is of a private school in Rochester doing a teacher-exchange with another school in Poland (Valdez, 2012). Valdez reports that “[t]en Montessori teachers from Poland are expected to arrive in Rochester Feb. 9.” The news report further quotes the head of school of the Rochester school as, “We're looking forward to enrichment, sharing practices and exchanging ideas.” As noted in Alberta Education (2008), these programs provide the students with “opportunities to develop and practise second or third language skills…, experiences with other cultures, histories and ways of life…, exposure to new and different environments…, authentic contexts within which to develop and practise crosscultural communication, problem solving and diplomacy skills…, and time to reflect on ways of living and learning” (p. 32). Another example is of some schools partnering with organizations to provide their students work or volunteer experiential learning opportunities and greater insight into how culture manifests in the world of work.

In Classroom Strategies

Burwitz-Melzer (2001) did a case study in which he introduced an unfamiliar culture to students, ages 14-15 years, via efferent reading which implies “that teachers work with a story or poem in class not only on cognitive but also on an affective level, offering analytical and creative tasks to arrive at a deeper understanding of the text” (p.
The students were asked to identify how and when culture comes into play in the story that “had no title and the ending was left out; also the pages were not numbered, leaving the learner the task to find out their proper order” (p. 34). In reading the text, searching for appropriate endings, re-writing scenes, adding some scenes for the selected ending, the students went through a process of internalizing the culture they are studying. Besides internalizing, Burwitz-Melzer reports of another phenomena:

Fragments of values and opinions they hold from their own cultural experiences seep into their discussions and written contributions, thereby creating … a kind of third culture or ‘inter’-culture, or simply an anxiety-free zone where foreign cultures can be freely discussed and explored. (p. 42)

Witte (2011) validated this finding and in advocating for a deeper cultural experience that “enables one to recognize the relativity of cultural contexts” reports that it leads to “a dynamic ‘third place’ on a continuum between the native and the target cultures” (p. 98). Mere exposure is “insufficient for consciously achieving a third place or acquiring intercultural competence” (Witte, 2011, p. 100).

Tarasheva and Davcheva (2001) described their pedagogical experience researching Bulgarian students’ books with Bulgarian students, ages 12-16 years. The work with native culture becomes a “process of unpeeling layers of personal experience, representations, core values, ideas and imaginings” (p. 45) to discover their cultural symbols and ways that otherwise remain hidden from consciousness as they are taken for granted. The process “crucially depended on providing the necessary critical distance” (Tarasheva & Davcheva, 2001, p. 56) from the subject. This implies to get the students to
view the subject with an outsider’s perspective. Toner (2010) refers to this as “multiple readings of the world” (p. 56).

Comparison of news reports from different nations and different cultures is a very revealing exercise of discovering different perspectives. Genova (2001) presented lesson plans to compare television news broadcasts from two different nations to raise their students’ awareness of cultural differences.

Duffy and Mayes (2001) described a project developed at Durham University that was developed to “enable English students to understand what it was like to be French” (p. 95). Alongside learning the French language, the students, in an upper secondary program in England, engaged in becoming aware of their English culture by carrying out surveys among families and friends to uncover cultural aspects they had previously taken for granted. Students also carried out similar interviews with French native speakers to see their English culture through the eyes of French people. To get insight into the French culture around some topics, like family, students created timelines of their family rituals and compared these with those of French native speakers’. Creative writing and role-play to describe own and other cultures are useful strategies that “[e]ven the least able students” (Duffy & Mayes, 2001, p. 100) are able to use to produce simple factual accounts.

**Beyond the Classroom**

Travelling abroad to other countries is another way to immerse students in a different culture. However, information technology and videos can also be used for “[o]bserving how people of a different culture communicate and comparing and
contrasting with one’s own, and thereby becoming aware of one’s own unconscious and in part non-verbal means of communication” (Carel, 2001, p. 146). Carel has developed the Virtual Ethnographer interactive courseware for developing second language and second culture learners’ “interpretative skills and knowledge” (p. 148). One of the modules takes students learning French on virtual travel through France meeting people via videos of interviews with them and witnessing their ways. The courseware also has an interactive section where the student does analysis of the video clips they see.

A novel approach to learning a second language and a second culture, by working outside the classroom to investigate a social issue, is described by Parsons and Junge (2001). The teachers discovered a cultural difference in how the second language students cared for their elderly and how they perceived the Danish doing so. They designed a program that allowed students to investigate this difference first-hand via field-trips to local hospitals and communes for seniors. They “found that even students with less developed Danish linguistic capacities were very active and motivated to find answers and in their own way were able to contribute to the final product” (p. 215).

A different approach to investigating a culture is to study its value system. Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Trumbull (1999) ran a workshop for bridging cultures that “focused on a basic value system common to Latino cultures that transcends languages, histories, and traditions” (p. 64). For example, within the Latino value system of collectivism “students are taught to be helpful to others and to contribute to the success of any group they belong to” (p. 64). Learning this value system in the context of the Latino practices brings about intercultural competence at a deeper level that perhaps
enables one to understand several other similar cultures’ practices. Although, this approach misses the language connection, competence in interaction may be more genuine and fruitful when one is able to understand the motivation and intent behind others’ actions.

In conclusion, Byram et al.’s (2001) comment that “to some extent teaching the intercultural dimension is a matter of seizing opportunities, being systematic in developing those opportunities – i.e. drawing on theory for help and guidance – and evaluating the results against clear and explicit criteria” (p. 4).

**Administrators’ Role in Fostering Intercultural Education**

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), “The evidence from the international research base is unequivocal – effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students” (as cited in Harris & Day, 2003, p. 89). Administrators, especially the principals, in schools play a key role in providing such leadership as is evident from Mitchell and Sackney’s (2009) research of ‘high-capacity learning community schools: “This kind of environment, in every case, grew first from the school principal’s belief in and commitment to building people” (p. 65). For championing the cause of intercultural education, administrators will need to encourage teachers to experiment. Mitchell and Sackney (2009) found that a “culture of experimentation not only raised the level of innovation and risk taking in the schools, but it also raised the level of professional autonomy” (p. 44). For such experimentation, though, administrators must empower the teaching staff with two capacities that Kanter (1979) identified for effectiveness: “first, access to the resources,
information, and support necessary to carry out a task; and, second, ability to get cooperation in doing what is necessary” (p 320).

For intercultural education, specifically, professional development opportunities for teachers are important. Walton et al. (2013) report that “[f]indings across 11 studies pointed to a need for supporting the development of teachers’ personal and professional intercultural capabilities, in order to foster intercultural development in their students” (p. 185). These opportunities must be multiple and engage the teachers in meaningful intercultural interactions. Shim (2012) reports that

overly optimistic accounts in intercultural education that, for instance, claims that pre-service teachers’ identities were transformed in the context of a single class on multiculturalism or that students of color were empowered because their teacher got to know something about their out-of-school lives is least likely. (p. 216)

Bringing a shift in attitudes and behaviors “requires continuous, rigorous, and even lifelong commitment, efforts, and struggles, as the set of socially acquired dispositions are invisible but durable and resistant to change” (Shim, 2012, p. 217). For example, “having the knowledge that discriminating against ethnic minority students is unethical and willing oneself into no longer being a racist, for instance, may not necessarily translate to the actual shifts in how one thinks and perceives others (at least not in the short term)” (p. 217).

Besides teachers’ professional development, intercultural education is more effective when taken on with a whole school approach. Walton et al. (2013) report that
“[s]even studies contend that teaching practice at the classroom level needs to be supported at a whole school level along with school leadership and administrative support” (p. 185). The energy from the whole school involvement makes intercultural education all the more meaningful and transforming for the students. Kamp and Mansouri (2010) opine that:

> If the entire school is engaged in a process of collaborative transformation, then students are likely to find such changes meaningful, rich and consistent; and teachers are likely to have the opportunity and confidence to build their skills, knowledge and awareness in working in culturally diverse settings. (p. 741)

The whole school approach includes the schools’ “philosophy and structures; leadership and attitudes; resources and facilities; and partnerships and relationships” (Kamp & Mansouri, 2010, p. 741). Toner (2010) writes that an:

> intercultural school sees itself as ‘a focal point of community life and thought’, developing ‘a relationship of deep and authentic reciprocity’ (Alexander, 2009, p. 45) with its community, as a place whose culture influences its community and, in turn, is influenced by it. (p. 217)

Also that, “an intercultural school cultivates a global outlook through its policies and programs, evidenced in the provision of a quality intercultural language program and whole school commitments to...global education” (p. 218). Implementing such a whole-school approach is, thus, the most effective strategy for administrators to bring about an intercultural transformation in the students.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. This chapter details the appropriateness of using generic qualitative research for this study, the rationale for conducting semistructured open-ended interviews, the strategy for selection of participants, and the methods for data collection and data analysis, and the ethical considerations.

Methodology

A generic qualitative research methodology guided this study; qualitative because this study inquired “into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, as cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 320). The purpose of this research was to obtain a deeper understanding of intercultural education and “when depth is more important, qualitative methods are more appropriate” (Slavin, 2007, p. 135). This qualitative study is generic because it does not claim to be either an ethnography, or case study, or grounded theory, or action research but uses the general methods of qualitative research.

Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) argued that generic qualitative research must address four key areas: “the theoretical positioning of the researcher…, the congruence between methodology and methods…, the strategies to establish rigor…, and the analytic lens through which the data are examined” (p. 9). The theoretical positioning for this study has been detailed in the first two chapters. The other three considerations for methods for
participant selection, for data collection, rigor and data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

**Participant Selection**

As the study needed to examine the perspectives of two elementary school administrators towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools, two participants were selected using both purposeful and convenience sampling. They were selected purposefully because they were considered to be “representative or informative about the topic of interest” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 138). A convenience sample was used “on the basis of [their] being accessible or expedient” (p. 137) in order to expedite the research. Participants were administrators in their respective schools: a faith-based Montessori private school with students from 18 months to 12 years of age, and a public elementary school. The private school administrator had been active in intercultural activities with the researcher’s school for a cultural exchange program, while the public school administrator had discussed some public school programs for intercultural education with the researcher. Both participants were professional acquaintances of the researcher. A letter of invitation was emailed to the participants and followed up with a phone call to confirm receipt and to explain the study and ethical considerations in more detail. The interview meeting was set up for the date and place chosen by the participants.

**Data Collection**

The qualitative approach for data collection for this study was semistructured open-ended interviews. Interviews were used to collect data because, as per Mack,
Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005), they “are optimal for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives, and experiences” (p. 2). Qualitative interviews take different forms. For example, McMillan and Schumacher (2009) identified three forms of interviews: “the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview” (p. 355). This study used an interview guide approach. The use of an interview guide helps ensure that topics of inquiry do not get missed inadvertently. McNamara (2009) argues that this “ensure[s] that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting information from the interviewee” (para. 4). The interview guide approach was preferable for this study as, being a novice researcher, an unstructured approach might have run the risk of missing certain topics while a structured approach may be too restrictive since it will not allow for follow-up conversations for clarifications or additional information.

In the interview guide approach the “topics are selected in advance, but the researcher decides the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 355). However, the interview guide constructed for this study also suggested the sequence and wording of questions. This was done to guard against the risk that novice researchers face in that they may focus on “the data that they want and phrase questions in a manner that enables interviewees to infer the desired response” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 357).
The questions in this study were developed in order to “obtain the present perceptions of activities, roles, feelings, motivations, concerns, and thoughts” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 355) of administrators towards intercultural education. Most of the interview guide questions were open-ended as per McNamara’s (2009) recommendation so that “respondents should be able to choose their own terms when answering questions” (para. 7). Care was taken to use neutral questions to “avoid wording that might influence answers, e.g., evocative, judgmental wording” (para. 7). Turner (2010) suggested that another consideration in wording the questions is to not make any assumptions of the respondent’s experiences or knowledge. An example of a question in the interview guide is, “What role do you play in ensuring students and staff develop skills in intercultural competence?” (See Appendix for the full interview guide.)

Probing questions were also developed to help ensure that if the response to a question required more elaboration, clarification, or more information, probing techniques could be employed. Simple and neutral probes were used “so as to not affect the nature of response” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 208); for example, silence, echoing, or simply saying “tell me more” (p. 208).

According to Slavin (2007), the “issue of potential bias is very serious in interviewing because interviewers can easily lead respondents to give the preferred responses” (p. 113). To avoid bias creeping into the interview process, care was taken to not use “inappropriate language which might indicate strength of feeling in one direction and permitting value judgments to influence the way research findings are interpreted”
(Bell, 2005, p. 166). The neutral wording of the questions was also intended to help in this regard.

In terms of sequence of questions, the guide was not considered a rigid order. Questions were grouped by topics and response to a given question could cover other questions. As well, a response could lead back to an earlier response for clarification or elaboration, or it could lead to a question in a different group. Demographic questions were dealt with in the beginning of the interview “to establish rapport and focus attention” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009, p. 359).

The interviews were conducted face-to-face at a location that was convenient to the respective participant. This was preferable as, “respondents in a face-to-face interview might expand on an answer by explaining why they hold a particular opinion or provide detailed descriptions of events or practices” (Slavin, 2007, p. 106). Choosing a location convenient to the participant was intended to help them “feel more comfortable and honest” (Slavin, 2007, p. 106).

The questions were emailed to the participants before the interview meeting to give the respondents the opportunity to have given thought and be prepared for the meeting. The interview meetings lasted a little over an hour. The interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed by me. The recording was useful as it allowed me to keep eye contact and remain interested in the conversations. It also was a useful tool for postinterview analysis and picking verbatim quotes. As McMillan and Schumacher (2009) noted, recording the interview “ensures completeness and provides material for reliability checks” (p. 360).
Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the process of transcription as the interview recordings were listened to again and again to manually transcribe them. The process gave a general sense of the data as a preparation of a more detailed analysis. The transcripts of the interviews were emailed to the participants for further comment. However, no further comment was received and there were no follow-up conversations.

The transcripts were analyzed manually for organizing data into the categories as per the six subquestions of this research. The intent of the analysis was not to identify any pattern or measure frequency of any particular code. Rather it was to identify by coding all significant mention of perspectives, approaches, and strategies for intercultural education that could be classified under the six categories. According to Richards (2005), “[T]his sort of coding is more like the filing techniques by which we sort everyday information and ensure access to everything about a topic” (p. 94). The topic codes based on the six subquestions of this research are: definition, importance, support, administration strategy, teacher-strategy, and barriers. The intent behind using topic codes was to look for new codes that could emerge from the analysis of the transcripts that were not covered under the designed six subquestions of research. After coding of the transcripts was done, data are analyzed under the respective themes of the six subquestions.

Rigor for Reliability

Caelli et al. (2003) argue that “qualitative approaches need to be rigorous” (p. 13). The authors found that “texts that engage this discourse struggle with questions such as: ‘What makes a qualitative account credible?’” (p. 14). In this generic qualitative
study, the requirement of rigor was addressed with attention to the reliability or credibility of the data collection. This was done by sending the transcribed interviews to the participants for verifying or for providing further clarifications of their respective accounts. McMillan and Schumacher (2009) wrote that in the process of participant review, the interviewed person may be asked to “review a transcript or synthesis of the data obtained from him or her” and the participant may be asked to “modify any information from the interview data for accuracy” (p. 332). This member review provides credibility for the data collected.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics clearance was received from the Research Ethics Review Board of Brock University (#13-024). The application was sent along with: (a) letter of invitation to potential participants, (b) the informed consent letter to the potential participants, and (c) the interview guide. To ensure full disclosure, I declared to the participants that I am also an administrator at a local school and explained the goals of the study. At the start of the interview I informed participants of their rights to decline and withdrawal from the study as well as assure them of their anonymity. The interview transcriptions refer to the participants with a pseudonym. The audio recordings and transcripts are stored on my password secured computer and will be destroyed 1 year after the study is completed.
Summary of Research Methodology

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. A generic qualitative research methodology guided this study. The qualitative approach for data collection for this study was semistructured open-ended interviews. Participants were administrators in their respective schools, had been active in intercultural activities at their school, and were professional acquaintances of the researcher. The interviews were digitally recorded and the interview transcripts were sent to participants to ensure accuracy. However, no follow-up conversations were required. Data were coded to align with the research subquestions. The study received clearance from the Research Ethics Review Board of Brock University.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE INTERVIEWS

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one the principal of a faith based school, and the other the vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. A generic qualitative research methodology guided this study. Data were collected using semistructured open-ended interviews that were digitally recorded. The interview transcripts were emailed to the participants for their review to ensure accuracy. This chapter begins with a section that provides background information on the participants who were interviewed. Following that are six sections that correspond with the six subquestions of this research. Each of the sections on the subquestions provides a synthesis of data collected through the interviews.

Background of Interview Participants

The first participant, Mary (a pseudonym), was the principal of a faith-based school. Mary’s school, at the time of the interview, was a CCMA accredited Montessori school with students from ages 18 months to Grade 8. The school was managed by a Board of Directors comprised of parents of children enrolled in the school and by members of the Jewish community. This is the only school governed by the board. Besides the Montessori academic curriculum, Mary’s school provided Jewish faith, Jewish culture, and Hebrew language teaching. Mary explained that the school’s mission included being an inclusive community. However, at the time of the interview, the school was inclusive only in terms of having all levels of observance of the Jewish faith, from
orthodox to liberal. At the time of this study, there were no students of other faiths and cultures in the school.

Mary was a trained Montessori teacher. She taught Montessori elementary classrooms for 20 years before moving into an administrative role in her current school in 2004. Earlier, in 2002, Mary completed her Master’s in Education at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). I first met Mary at our school when she visited us on behalf of CCMA for our school’s accreditation in the year 2011. She was pleased to see how we had constructed the faith and culture program at our school. Later that year, she invited elementary students from our school to visit an elementary classroom’s students at her school for a cultural exchange. Students from our school witnessed how Hanukkah is celebrated by the Jewish community and also informed students from Mary’s school of some teachings of the Sikh faith. The students also played together before returning.

The second participant, Sherry (a pseudonym), was the vice-principal of a public elementary school. Sherry’s school is part of a district school board in the GTA. The school is a pre-kindergarten to Grade 8 school. The school community is mostly South Asian with a diversity of South Asian cultures including Punjabi, Gujrati, Tamil, and Pakistani. Over the years, the school community has increasingly become South Asian, and the school board has responded to this change by assigning South Asian administrators to this school. The teaching staff is quite diverse with teachers of European, South Asian, and African-American cultural backgrounds.

Sherry was raised in British Columbia, Canada, and went to school, college, and university there. Sherry worked as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) for about 3 years
in Alberta before moving to Toronto. After teaching for 22 years, with stints in three
different school boards, Sherry was appointed vice principal in her school.

**Defining Intercultural Education**

Both participants defined intercultural education to be about learning and
celebrating a variety of cultures. Mary said that living in a multiculturally rich country
and city, students are owed an education and opportunities to be exposed to other cultures
and other religions. Mary was quite specific about expecting the outcome of intercultural
education to be preparing students to regard people of other cultures “with respect and
without fear.” Similarly, Sherry referred to a program that her school board initiated, The
Future We Want, to report that the intercultural education program is about
understanding different cultures and recognizing “how race, culture, and even other
‘isms’ are manifest.”

While both participants agreed that intercultural education has to include training
on interacting effectively across cultural differences, Mary, the principal of the faith-
based school, spoke more about the need for consciously facilitating intercultural
interactions. Mary asserted that for the intercultural education to have meaning,
interaction with other cultures is very important. She said that, “they get more from that
interaction and [develop a] curiosity to know that it's a great big wonderful world
populated by wonderful people and it's important to get to know everybody.” For Mary,
intercultural education encompasses theoretical study of other cultures, exposure to other
cultures, and interaction with them “as much as we can.” However, in further elaboration,
Mary confirmed that interaction opportunities were very few in her school.
Both interviewees recognized in addition to understanding other cultures, students need education and training about their own culture. Mary commented that “people who are insecure in who they are themselves feel threatened by people who are different.” This, she said, happens even between people in the same culture and stems from a lack of understanding of their own culture. Sherry also reported that in her board “there is a lot of push towards bringing children’s first language and their culture” into the school. However, these programs, she says, are offered only in Saturday schools.

Finally, in terms of defining intercultural education, both participants referred to the development of character traits. Having an open mind, being self-confident, being kind and considerate are some important traits that Mary identified. Sherry believed that programs for fostering character traits like “respect, open mindedness, responsibility” are also part of intercultural education as “they are really leading towards a better understanding of [differences]” whether cultural, physical, or otherwise.

**Importance Accorded to Intercultural Education**

The second subquestion for this study was about the importance that the administrators accorded to intercultural education. While Sherry referred to programs initiated by her school board, like the Future we Want, and Leader in Me, to affirm that she valued intercultural education, Mary drew her inspiration from her school’s mission statement that included a focus on Opening Hearts and Minds. She affirmed that this mission has guided and supported her intercultural initiatives to open the students’ hearts and minds to other cultures. Sherry reported that she is aligned with her school board in terms of the importance of intercultural education. Her school board’s character
education programs and curriculum make connections with intercultural education but it is up to individual teachers and administrators as to “how far they take the program.” At her school, Sherry asserted that while teachers were already very keen on developing intercultural programs, the administrators holding them accountable for including or considering intercultural education gives it further importance. Sherry believed that the implementation of cultural education varies from school to school “depending on the principal and where they put their focus.” She said, “For example, go north of the city, where you might have a hand full of Asian students or minority students, you don't see those programs running as well or being a priority.” Her observations were based on her work as a teacher in those schools over the years.

In Mary’s school, where all the students are of the Jewish faith, Mary emphasized that, “it is very important for our children to understand that we are not exclusive.” She commented that it is “enriching to be with people of other cultures as it creates synergy.” For this her staff made efforts to find intercultural interactions outside the school. At least once a year, they invited students of a different culture from another school to join their students for a cultural celebration.

The importance given to intercultural education was not directly reflected in the curriculum at Mary’s school but was implied. She explained that the teachers exploited opportunities that come in other curriculum areas for exploring or interacting with other cultures. Similarly, Sherry pointed out that the Ontario curriculum does not address intercultural education directly but it does provide guidance on curriculum and also on resources from which teachers could create intercultural education programs. As an
example, she reported that the board sent her school books and resources to include at her school’s library and her staff chose from amongst the board’s recommendations based on the diversity at her school.

**Support to Administrators for Fostering Intercultural Education**

In terms of support to the administrator for fostering intercultural education, the participants had contrasting situations. Mary reported that her board neither opposed the intercultural initiatives nor did it provide any active support. “I'm not sure I could consider it supportive or non supportive. They are interested, they like to hear about it, those that are parents, but I'm not sure I would call it support.” Sherry, on the other hand, indicated that her school board provided a lot of support. She said,

It really is dependent on what … an administrator is willing to take on and then you will find the support for it. There's enough support … we have an equity person, we have a person who represents the settlement workers, [and] we have settlement workers in our school who are placed [to] work with our parents and… our kids who are coming new to Canada. We also have a community liaison that we can access… [and] also have translation services that are available through our board.

Although there are a few resources available at Sherry’s school board to support intercultural education, administrators have to take the initiative to seek the support.

Mary noted that she had support from staff in that they were happy to engage in her push for providing intercultural experiences to students. However, there were no opportunities for training and support for either administrators or teaching staff at her
school. Sherry, in contrast, reported that her board provided administrators and resource teachers with training for new program initiatives, including those intended to help foster intercultural education, by the board. Teachers and administrators in Sherry’s school board also had special interest groups where they had opportunities to discuss cultural perspectives. For example, Sherry was a member of the South Asian Teachers Network that had a vision “to take what's happening in education and provide a South Asian perspective.” She referred to an issue they addressed via the South Asian Teachers Network. The issue was of teachers’ perspective of the South Asian students’ strength in math. Sherry said that teachers would often comment on South Asian students by noting that “they can do … rote memory math really well because they can add and subtract but they don't really understand, but we would never say that about reading, [that] they can read really well but they don't really understand!” Therefore, the South Asian Teachers Network invited a researcher from an Ontario University who spoke about the cultural factors, the role that the South Asian communities’ background plays, and how the cultural factor can be looked at positively.

**Administrative Strategies for Intercultural Education**

Both participants spoke of similar strategies for motivating staff and holding them accountable. “I speak to them about it and check in,” said Mary. Her talk was about motivating staff to consciously look for all opportunities to make intercultural learning connections in the curriculum. She did this when she reviewed lesson plans and also during staff reviews. Sherry reported a similar strategy and said that in her role as a vice-principal she was an instructional leader and that required participating in grade level
meetings and in team planning and that was where she ensured that the teachers, in delivering the curriculum, were thinking of intercultural education.

Both participants followed up with staff in a similar fashion to ensure that intercultural education was, indeed, happening. Mary observed lessons for this and also made sure that the intercultural initiatives were reported in the school newsletter so that parents were also aware. Sherry, besides observing lessons, spoke about checking in at teacher performance appraisals. In discussing teacher competencies, she would look for the teacher’s intercultural education work, for inclusivity, for material being used.

Both administrators spoke about the functions that are held in their schools for celebrating certain cultural events. In Sherry’s school, there were dedicated months for cultural celebrations. For example, in February the school celebrated Black History Month and in May they had South Asian cultural celebrations. As part of these celebrations, students worked on projects, made presentations, and put on cultural dresses. In Mary’s school, celebrations of other cultures usually stemmed from the projects students were working on. She encouraged students to invite her to their cultural feasts so that “they realize that I'm supportive of [intercultural education].”

In addition to encouraging teachers to incorporate intercultural education into the regular curriculum, Mary also encouraged staff to create cultural exchange opportunities with other schools. This was perhaps a notable difference between Sherry’s and Mary’s administrative initiatives for intercultural education. Mary made sure the teachers had time in their schedules for arranging cultural exchange opportunities. She would volunteer to manage their classroom for half an hour or have them send their students to
the gym for half an hour so that the teachers could “make the phone calls, make the experience happen, or write that email.” Mary also supported the students going outside the school for intercultural experiences and encouraged teachers to facilitate those.

**Teachers’ Strategies for Intercultural Education**

Teachers in both participants’ schools use a variety of strategies to include intercultural education in their lessons. Sherry noted that the matter of intercultural education is taken into consideration in bringing resources in the school library. Her board makes recommendations from which teachers ordered the resources with consideration given to exposing students to a variety of cultures. In preparing the environment for learning about a particular culture, teachers at Mary’s school brought “all kinds of things for children to touch and feel.” For example, in wanting her students to learn about the Turkish culture, a teacher brought in Turkish decorations. She showed the children how to henna her hands, she brought in a craft that they could do themselves and there was Turkish food. Mary claimed that food was the easiest way to get children attracted to a culture.

To engage students in cultural learning, teachers in Mary’s school inspired students to work on projects researching various cultures. In the lower elementary grades, teachers gave certain guidelines for research to get the students started; however, in upper elementary, a little motivation was enough. “So, she will say why don’t you study a country and what country would you like to study?” Mary reported that in that academic year, students had “studied the language, the religion, the culture, the arts for Japan, for Mexico, and for India.” With each project’s presentation, the students also prepared a
feast with food from the culture under study. Sherry reported similar work going on in her school. She gave the example of students picking up cultural projects based on immigrants coming to Canada. In her experience, Sherry had found that “the teachers are very proactive in bringing in different cultures into school and administrators are very supportive of it.” Sherry argued that the teachers’ lessons and activities to promote character traits like respect, open mindedness, and responsibility also “lead towards a better understanding of [differences]” whether cultural, physical, or otherwise.

One strategy used by teachers at Mary’s school was to escort students to other culture centers around the city for research. For example, a teacher took her students, with the students dressed in a kimono to a Japanese cultural center in Ontario to interview the people there. In Sherry’s school, teachers invited experts to come to the school. For example, teachers invited an author, who had written about children in wars in Afghanistan, to talk about what the children go through there. Teachers also brought in a writer of West Indian ethnicity to talk about “his experiences growing up and where he is today as a Canadian.”

Teachers at Sherry’s school also used parents as resources for intercultural exposure. They would get parents of students to come in to class and read in their ethnic language and had students who understood the ethnic language to translate it into English. Sherry explained that in writing those stories from other languages to English, the students “were using their background knowledge to provide information to the other students.” Some parent volunteers also created special cultural clubs. In Sherry’s school, a parent created a Spanish club. The intercultural exposure “hasn't been to the extent I
would've liked but we have had four or five students learn Spanish who were not of Spanish background.”

Teachers in both participants’ schools also planned cultural celebrations. Teachers at Mary’s school invited other schools to join in the celebrations. Mary said that the intent was not only that our students learn about other cultures but also that “other children learn about our culture as well.”

Barriers Faced by Administrators for Fostering Intercultural Education

Neither of the participants reported any significant barriers to their efforts to foster intercultural education at their schools. For Mary, it was simply a matter of having more time. “There is so much that needs to be accomplished. We have a double curriculum,” she said referring to their school’s requirement of teaching the Ontario curriculum as well as Jewish studies. She reported that initiative is there, the resources are there, “it is just finding the time and the organization” to accomplish the task of intercultural education. For Sherry, it was of having motivated staff. She said that “it is all dependent on the teachers.” If they want to bring in different cultures or different perspectives, no administrator would say, ‘No, you can't!'”.

Summary of Interviews

Interviews with the two administrators focused around the six subquestions of research of this study. The face-to-face interviews were digitally recorded and their transcripts were prepared by me. I sent the transcripts to the two participants for review to ensure accuracy. However, no further response was received from either participant. The data collected from the interviews have been analyzed in this chapter. Definitions
provided by the two participants regard intercultural education as an exercise in learning about other cultures while the outcomes desired are of interaction with people of other cultures with respect and without fear for co-existence. Both participants regarded intercultural education as important but their schools do not have intercultural education as a distinct component in their curriculums. The participant from the public school reported that her board has a variety of resources that her school can take advantage of for fostering intercultural education. However, the support required has to be identified by the administrators and then sought from the board. The participant from the faith-based school reported that her board does not provide any support and all intercultural education initiatives are managed within the school’s resources. Both participants practiced similar strategies for fostering intercultural education in their schools, from motivating staff, observing lessons, to staff evaluations. Teachers in the participants’ schools engaged students in a variety of activities and projects. However, these strategies did not involve much intercultural interaction. Other than a lack of time, the participants did not identify any significant barriers to their efforts to foster intercultural education in their schools.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. The study could be useful to administrators and teachers in becoming better informed about strategies for fostering a whole-school approach to intercultural education. The main research question of this study was split into six subquestions. This chapter provides a summary of the study followed by discussion on the findings organized around each of the six subquestions of research. It concludes with the key findings of the study.

Summary of Study

A generic qualitative research methodology guided this study. The method for data collection was semistructured open-ended interviews. An interview guide was designed to facilitate a conversation that was structured around chosen questions but allowed for follow-up clarifications and discussion. Participants were administrators in their respective schools, had been active in intercultural activities at their school, and were professional acquaintances of the researcher. The interviews were digitally recorded and the interview transcripts were sent to participants to ensure accuracy. Participants did not provide any feedback on the interview transcripts. Data were coded to align with the research subquestions.

For each of the six subquestions, the responses of the participants were synthesized and compared. The definitions of intercultural education provided by the two participants were analyzed. Both regarded intercultural education as an exercise in
learning about cultures such that students are able to interact with people of other cultures with respect and without fear for co-existence. The participants noted that for students to interact with other cultures, they need to have a good understanding of their own culture. Both participants regarded intercultural education as important but neither school had intercultural education as a distinct subject in their curriculums. The participant from the public school reported that her board has a variety of resources that her school can take advantage of for fostering intercultural education. The support required has to be identified by the administrators and then requested from the board. The participant from the faith-based school reported that her board does not provide any support and all intercultural education initiatives are managed within the school’s resources. Both participants practiced similar strategies for fostering intercultural education within their schools including motivating staff, observing lessons, and staff evaluations. Teachers in the participants’ schools engaged students in a variety of activities and projects; however, interaction with members of other cultures was limited. Other than a lack of time, the participants did not identify any significant barriers to their efforts to foster intercultural education in their schools.

**Discussion**

In the *International Commission on Education for the 21st Century* report, Delors (1996) identified four foundations or pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. Toner (2010) paraphrased the report’s explanation of the fourth pillar of education, learning to live together, as students’ development of “knowledge, capabilities, dispositions and skills to appreciate the rich
diversity of lives beyond their own” (p. 7). Models for building intercultural competence with such a set of knowledge, capabilities, dispositions, and skills were studied by Manjarrés (2009). She found that the models coincide in emphasizing the importance of “learners’ awareness of own culture, an understanding of the relations between language and culture, and in providing insights into ways to explore, analyze and compare cultures” (p. 144). For developing these insights, Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) argues that the work of intercultural education is to provide encounters with a “variety of cultural fragments” (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 17) rather than focussing on acquiring culture as knowledge of a set of characteristics and traits. Emphasizing the importance of intercultural encounters, Walton et al. (2013) reported that

across seven studies, it was found that only building cultural knowledge and cultural awareness can have little if any effect on attitudes or behaviours, and may even reinforce prejudices if students’ attitudes toward people from different cultural backgrounds are not explicitly addressed and thoughtfully discussed. (p. 185)

In addition to building knowledge and awareness of other cultures, it is important for educators to provide opportunities for students to “appropriately interact with people from other cultures in a variety of contexts by drawing on interpersonal skills such as empathy, openness and flexibility, perspective-taking, reflexivity (meta-cognitive skills) and conflict resolution” (Walton et al., 2013, p. 181).

Both participants stressed the importance of students learning their own culture. While the faith-based school’s daily practices and teachings include the students’ own
culture, the public school provided weekend optional programs that students could join for learning their culture. Further study is required to understand how effective the weekend programs are in building students’ self-awareness in their culture.

One finding of this study is that both participants’ understanding of the task of intercultural education tended to be limited to learning and celebration of various cultures. Sherry’s school had specific months dedicated to certain cultural presentations and celebrations. Mary’s school invited students of other cultural backgrounds to join in their cultural celebrations. Students at Mary’s school also made elaborate cultural celebrations with food and costumes as part of their research projects into other cultures. However, there were few opportunities provided in either school for students to engage in cultural encounters that are followed up with critical discussions for recognizing cultural differences, anticipating multiple culture based viewpoints, and identifying the misrepresented, the suppressed, and the absent cultural viewpoints. These findings developed from the two administrators’ perspective echo Klein’s (2004) findings of a study done with teachers. Manjarrés (2009) reports from Klein’s study that for teachers “culture learning meant basically facts about the culture and making gains in tolerance and understanding” (p. 149). Halualani (2011) recommended that schools should create a “critical intercultural perspective and practice [...] through which students interrogate and question the conditions around which ‘culture’ is formed and intervene in its seamless production by articulating ‘what is absent’ and ‘what should be’” (p. 44). Toner (2010) summarizes this direction for intercultural education as one that “seeks to move beyond learning about other people and cultures to focus on interaction and learning from others,
encouraging curiosity, empathy, the capacity to see multiple perspectives and in so doing to grow in self-knowledge” (p. 116).

Toner (2010) reported that creating such intercultural education in practice will require more than good will. She analyzed Australian government policy documents and school curriculums to report that “cultural diversity is generally met with good will and intentions in education; it is, nonetheless, given low priority in policy commitments and is treated superficially in most school programs” (p. 1). Toner reasoned that “intercultural education [should be considered] as part of the core curriculum arguing that in the context of a diverse, changing and uncertain world, social and intercultural capabilities should be considered essential elements in all students’ learning” (p. 1). North American scholars, Lustig and Koester (1993) also argued that intercultural education “cannot be excluded from the critical educational goals in our schools” (as cited in O’Neill, 2007, p. 208) while European scholars, Stier et al. (2012), advocated for introducing students to intercultural education as early as preschool reporting that “children in preschools with intercultural curricula have more domain-specific racial knowledge” (p. 286). However, Toner, with reference to the Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education Report (2006), observed that: “[in] mainstream schools (particularly those with largely monocultural populations) this sort of work is generally not seen as a priority, with many schools and their teachers arguing that the curriculum is already seriously overloaded” (p. 12). The same Report found that faith-based schools are more motivated for intercultural interaction, with “the desire for
interaction between schools most often comes from Islamic schools (as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 12).

Participants in this study confirmed that intercultural education is not a distinct subject in their schools’ curriculums. Mary commented that her school already had a “double curriculum” (Jewish studies and Ontario curriculum) and it was hard to find time for more intercultural programs. Sherry pointed out that the Ontario curriculum does not address intercultural education directly but it does provide guidance on curriculum and also on resources from which teachers could create intercultural education programs. It is, therefore, dependent on the administrators’ and teachers’ motivation to provide intercultural connections in the curriculum of other subjects. Sherry reported, on the basis of her experience working as a teacher in various schools, that the level of priority given to intercultural education varies from school to school and is dependent on the administrator. This study was quite limited in the number of administrators interviewed to determine whether faith-based school administrators are more or less motivated to bring intercultural education into their schools.

Byram and Feng (2005) contend that administrators would be “mistaken to assume that teachers can competently provide explanations of complex issues to their students by simply drawing on text information and personal experience” (as cited in Manjarrés, 2009, p. 149). Shim (2012) points out another mistake of overly optimistic accounts in intercultural education that, for instance, claims that pre-service teachers’ identities were transformed in the context of a single class
on multiculturalism or that students of color were empowered because their teacher got to know something about their out-of-school lives is least likely. (p. 216)

Manjarrés argued that intercultural education “requires relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for intercultural encounters for which most teachers may not be prepared” (p. 145). Teachers have to engage in a continuous self-introspective intercultural practice just as the students do, since bringing a shift in attitudes and behaviors “requires continuous, rigorous, and even lifelong commitment, efforts, and struggles, as the set of socially acquired dispositions are invisible but durable and resistant to change” (p. 217). In contrast, participants in this study reported that there were very few professional development opportunities focussed on intercultural education for teachers and administrators.

The literature suggests that teachers use a variety of strategies for fostering intercultural education. The first and foremost consideration is that “being intercultural is an activity” (Byram, 2003, as cited in Toner, 2010, p. 23). This implies that in all intercultural teaching strategies, positive interaction must be at the heart of the learning. Walton et al. (2013) reported that “[f]indings across 17 studies suggest that ICU [intercultural understanding] can be developed by making personal connections with individuals of different cultural groups in a supportive environment, and in ways that are meaningful and relevant to students’ lives” (p. 185). For building interaction into learning activities, teachers have to choose “content that portrays a range of perspectives and resources that make those perspectives accessible to students” (Toner, 2010, p. 55) and
must also provide “explicit opportunities to interact with a range of people, and to participate in learning experiences in settings outside the school, to broaden and deepen their experiences and ways of seeing the world (Toner, 2010, p. 187). Interactions outside the school may be created with other schools, across the globe, with other community organizations.

Participants in this study revealed that the intercultural education students were engaged in was mostly about learning another culture and participating in other cultural celebrations. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) write that such education, devoid of meaningful engagement, is a “superficial ‘celebration of difference’ through ‘foods and festivals’ activities rather than an examination of how ‘difference’ serves to advantage some and disadvantage others” (as cited in Kamp & Mansouri, 2010, p. 735). For long term, effective impact of intercultural education, teachers and administrators have to facilitate opportunities for meaningful interaction with unfamiliar cultures along with their study.

One of the participants, Sherry, reported that her school board emphasizes programs that build character traits like empathy and respect. Toner (2010) opines that though empathy may be a desirable attribute in itself, in many circumstances it may amount to little more than feeling sorry for someone, a response as fleeting as the exposure to another’s pain. Ideally, in learning intended to strengthen intercultural understanding, empathy is not an end in itself but acts as a catalyst for critical analysis and action. (pp. 169-170).
Therefore, the character trait programs are important but are not in themselves sufficient as a means of intercultural education.

The literature suggests that teachers use strategies within the classroom as well for providing authentic intercultural encounters. Burwitz-Melzer (2001) did a case study in which he introduced an unfamiliar culture to students, ages 14-15 years, via efferent reading which implies assigning various analytical and creative tasks around the content so as to internalize the content they are studying. There are other examples in literature of teachers using newspapers from different cultures. Participants in this study gave examples of students engaging in research projects into other cultures. Mary reported that in the lower elementary grades, the teachers give guidelines for doing the research. However, the upper elementary students take their research projects in their own directions with little motivation from the teachers. Sherry gave the example of students choosing various ethnic groups to research on during a unit of immigration of various cultural groups to Canada. For such in-classroom work, intercultural education takes place as teachers and students engage in critical analysis in the research, presentations, and projects.

The faith-based school administrator in this study spoke about using school partnerships for fostering intercultural connections. School boards could help in facilitating these partnerships as advocated by Alberta Education (2008). The school partnerships can be created to provide students practice with another language and contexts for authentic experiences with other cultures.
Apart from teaching intercultural education in the classrooms, research calls for schools to adopt a whole-school approach. Walton et al. (2013) report that “[s]even studies contend that teaching practice at the classroom level needs to be supported at a whole school level along with school leadership and administrative support” (p. 185). Kamp and Mansouri (2010) contended that the energy from the whole school involvement makes intercultural education all the more meaningful, more consistent and transforming for the students and teachers. It also gives teachers more opportunities to build their own knowledge and skills related to intercultural education. The whole school approach includes the schools’ “philosophy and structures; leadership and attitudes; resources and facilities; and partnerships and relationships” (Kamp & Mansouri, 2010, p. 741). Toner (2010) emphasized that an intercultural school should develop deep reciprocal relationships within its community and also should cultivate a global outlook through its policies and programs.

Both participants in this study made efforts to engage their schools in intercultural programs but there was no discussion of a whole-school engagement. This study’s participants may not have reflected on intercultural education deeply, because the interview time was very limited, and the questions did not move them in the direction of thinking about whole school transformation. The public school administrator reported that she had a lot of resources at her school board available for support: equity person, settlement workers, community liaison person, and translation services for various languages. However, it will take further research to establish how these resources could create and facilitate intercultural programs to help administrators.
Both participants revealed similar strategies for encouraging delivery of intercultural education by the teachers from motivating staff, reviewing lesson plans, observing lessons, and doing staff appraisals with intercultural education in mind. The administrator of the faith-based school volunteered in classrooms so that the teachers could find time to arrange intercultural activities. Apart from making resources available, providing such cooperation makes teachers more motivated and effective as argued by Kanter (1979), where she identified two capacities for empowering staff for effectiveness: “first, access to the resources, information, and support necessary to carry out a task; and, second, ability to get cooperation in doing what is necessary” (p 320).

In being able to facilitate intercultural education in their schools, the administrators were unable to identify any significant barriers to their efforts other than having enough time to do it. Perhaps this was a result of the subject matter holding a low priority in the administrators’ perspective. This question will need a more thorough research when schools begin to look to implement intercultural activities that are meaningful within, without, and between schools.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it was implemented in their schools. The participants in the study were experienced administrators who valued the idea of creating opportunities for intercultural education and shared their perspectives on the six subquestions of this study. The key findings of this study are:
1. The administrators’ understanding of intercultural education tended to be limited to learning and celebration of various cultures.

2. The intercultural education strategies used in the respective schools focused on developing a knowledge base and provided limited intercultural interaction.

3. The subject of intercultural education is not included in the schools' curriculum as a distinct subject.

4. The public school had greater resources available than the private faith-based school. However, the resources were not always used to facilitate intercultural education.

5. Teachers and administrators were provided with very few professional development opportunities focused on intercultural education.

This study presented, from an administrator’s perspective, the approach two schools in GTA were taking for implementing intercultural education. This study could be useful for administrators towards understanding the full scope of intercultural education, and for strategies for facilitating a whole-school approach to it. Educators can use this study for examples of meaningful intercultural education strategies. Most of all, policy makers can use this study to recognize the gaps in theory and in practice in two schools of GTA towards whole school intercultural education.

This study identified the following areas for further research:
1. Further study is required to understand how effective the public schools’ weekend ethnic language and culture programs are in building students’ self-awareness in their culture.

2. A study to report on how resources at the public school boards in GTA could be better engaged to create and facilitate intercultural programs to help administrators would be useful.

3. Further research is required to identify the barriers administrators might face in implementing a whole-school approach to intercultural education. This study was not able to collect sufficient data with regards to the question of barriers due to lack of data. New resources, new tools, and perhaps funding will have to be looked at when schools begin to implement intercultural interactions across the globe.

4. Further research to quantify these findings across a large sample of schools may be useful in identifying the critical areas of concern for school boards.

I would like to conclude this study with an inspirational paragraph from Shim’s (2012) essay on the work of intercultural education:

Will ethnic and cultural differences always exist? Will tensions between and among different cultural groups always exist? Will dissensus always exist? Yes. Will unequal power dynamics in intercultural education ever cease to exist? Will the system of domination and inequality ever go away entirely? Probably not. However, even in times as difficult as the present, ‘the world is incomplete and history is unfinished and the future is open ended, and what we think and do can
make a difference, individually and collectively’. (West 2000, as cited in Shim, 2012, p. 218)

Fear of differences, stereotypes, and unawareness of others’ cultural sensitivities have long plagued humanity but with the fast pace of globalization, the task of intercultural education is now more critical than ever. This study highlighted the role that administrators play in making the intercultural education in our schools authentic to have a transforming effect for our students towards forming a critical intercultural mindset.
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http://www.montessorischools.org/overview/origin_of_montessori.html


Appendix

Interview Guide

Interviewing Tips

- Ask questions in slow-normal speed and neutral tone with emphasis on key words
- Listen, giving full attention to the respondent
- Use prompts to get clarification or for elaboration. Some questions have information in brackets that must be covered in the responses. Use prompts if necessary to get this information. However, just as the questions are worded, the prompts must not attempt to influence the answer; they should be non-directive.
- Although, recording is on, make notes about special emphasis, body language. Transcribe the recording soon after interview. Put your notes in brackets wherever appropriate.

Introduction to Participant

This study examines the perspectives of two elementary school administrators (one principal of a faith based school, and one vice-principal of a public school) towards intercultural education and how it is implemented in their schools. Your participation will provide insights into practical challenges that you face and solutions that you facilitate at your school for fostering intercultural education. Views of intercultural education in literature: Deardorff (2011) considers the work of intercultural education to be one that builds “effective and appropriate behavior and communication” (p. 38) for interacting with people of other cultures. Toner (2010) offers that intercultural education is also about self-introspection to challenge the stereotypes that we unconsciously carry about
other cultures. Halualani (2011) advocates for a “critical intercultural perspective and practice [...] through which students interrogate and question the conditions around which ‘culture’ is formed and intervene in its seamless production by articulating ‘what is absent’ and ‘what should be’ (p. 44).

**Background**

1. What is your educational background? (Degrees held, special training or accreditation).

2. Describe your professional background – how long have you been an administrator and how has your career evolved (were you a teacher before)?

3. How do you describe the community that your school serves in terms of cultural backgrounds? Prompt to make sure the answer covers the following questions:
   - How many students are enrolled in your school?
   - Which cultural and religious groups do students in your school belong to?
   - How long has the school been in operation?
   - How has the student population/make-up changed over time?
   - If it has changed, how has the school responded to this change in the student body?
   - Which cultural groups are represented among the staff at your school?

4. How do you define intercultural education? What are the objectives, you believe, for intercultural education?
Importance of Intercultural Education

5. Has the inclusion of intercultural education been identified as an academic priority by any of the stakeholders in your school (teachers, parents, administrators, central office/Board Office). If so, what specific concerns have been made, or recommendations made? (by teachers, parents, etc.)

Teaching Strategies

6. How is the topic of intercultural education addressed in your school curriculum at the various grade levels?

7. What activities do students engage in that help them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of different cultures?

8. Describe the ways in which you and your staff promote intercultural education at your school for:
   a. being familiar with cultural phenomena in own and others
   b. analysis and interpretation of unfamiliar cultural practices
   c. opportunities to interact in other cultural settings

9. What literary texts are used to introduce others (different cultures)?

10. What initiatives are taken for learning other languages?

11. Which skills do students need to develop for intercultural competence? Describe teaching strategies in your school that you are aware of for developing these skills.

12. What opportunities do your teachers provide students for engaging in positive intercultural encounters – activities or conversations?
Support for Administrators

13. What types of support systems are available to you for fostering intercultural education? How does your school board provide you support for fostering intercultural education in your school?

Administrative Strategies

14. What role do you play in ensuring students and staff develop skills in intercultural competence?

15. Do you have an institutional overall strategy regarding development of intercultural competence in students?

16. How do you motivate your staff to engage students in intercultural education?

17. How do you train your staff to engage students in intercultural education? What support systems or programs do you put in place for staff or students for intercultural education?

- What professional development do teachers receive to make them more sensitive to the specific needs of students from cultures other than their own?

- What professional development do teachers receive to assist them in teaching students to be more culturally sensitive (aware of and respectful of other cultures)?

18. How do you provide opportunities for teachers to create partnerships beyond the school?
Barriers to Fostering Intercultural Education

19. What are some barriers that you encounter in being able to foster intercultural education in your school?

20. What are some barriers that your teachers face in being able to foster intercultural education?