

**ENABLING**

**STUDENT TEACHERS**

**OF LITERATURE**

**TO BECOME**

**AGENTS OF CHANGE**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Arts of the University of KwaZulu-Natal  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy.**

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**2013**

## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a study involving student teachers of literature in a teacher education programme who used literary texts as catalysts for implementing change. The researcher asserted that if student teachers are empowered with sound disciplinary knowledge, effective pedagogical tools and an understanding of how to bring about academic and social change, they can make a difference to the lives of their learners, irrespective of context or resources. Critical pedagogy served as the theoretical framework for the study which was characterised by a system of interventions within six participatory action research cycles. The researcher found that participants responded positively to co-operative, experiential learning strategies in lecture-rooms that were perceived to be safe. When participants recognised that their views were respected, their interactions with others were characterised by respect as well. They realised that having agency and voice did not mean denying others the same. They felt empowered to make decisions and access resources, and they embraced challenges perceived to be valuable. By the end of the study, participants recognised that teachers can serve as primary resources in schools if they empowered themselves with deep content knowledge, pedagogical skills and a transformative agenda, and if they actively engage learners, scaffold learning, build on prior knowledge and skills, affirm histories, and enable a classroom where learners' contributions are valued. Participants established that to serve as agents of change in the classroom, teachers need to critically reflect on their practices and confront their prejudices. In addition, they need to ascertain the underpinning philosophy of their practices. Only then can they determine the roles and functions that comprise their identities as teachers. Ultimately, the researcher draws on the knowledge from participatory action research, critical pedagogy and literary texts to enable change agency in a lecture-room at a School of Education. The thesis adds to the discourses on teacher education, participatory action research, critical pedagogy and change agency and contributes to knowledge by showing that using participatory action research and critical pedagogy in a lecture-room is feasible and useful in enabling the transformation and empowerment of students.

**KEY WORDS:** Teacher education; Critical pedagogy; Participatory action research; Agents of change; Student teachers

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1. Introduction

The focus of this thesis is a study involving student teachers of literature in a teacher education programme. The study aimed for an empowerment and transformation agenda. The researcher entered the research process with the contention that if student teachers are empowered with sound disciplinary knowledge, effective pedagogical tools and an understanding of how to bring about academic and social change, then they can make a difference to the lives of their learners, irrespective of context or resources.

However, the study could not have achieved its ends without a clear understanding of the context in which it operates. South Africa is recognised as a country working through the freedoms and challenges of a democratic political dispensation. This dispensation has been achieved after almost three hundred years of colonial rule by the Dutch and British, and almost half a decade of apartheid rule, characterised by the imposition of White minority rule over all other inhabitants of the country. During apartheid rule, the rights of most South Africans were severely compromised, and the ramifications of apartheid crept into every facet of a person's life. Privileged communities had an abundance of resources, both material and human; underprivileged, oppressed communities lacked effective material and human resources. Thus, South Africa emerged into a democracy scarred by many configurations of repression. Of particular concern to this study is that education is still affected by South Africa's past and is often characterised by crisis (Bloch 2009). As Vally (2002, 81) notes,

The apartheid education system engineered race, class, gender and ethnic categories to serve and reinforce the political economy of the racial capitalist system. Present-day education in South Africa must be understood with reference to this history.

It is against this backdrop that the present study has been undertaken. The study is based on the premise that a possible solution to the crisis could lie in the practices and dispositions of the teacher. The researcher contends that teacher education programmes have to be transformed so that they develop and empower teachers to confront the challenges of South African realities, redress inequalities and teach to make a difference to their learners' lives.

Thus, a study working with student teachers has to recognise the effects of the historical, social, economic and political contexts from which they emerge, within which they study and

where they will serve as teachers. In addition, if student teachers are not empowered with a transformation agenda, it is possible that they will not recognise the forces that shaped and still shape them, and thus will reproduce the existing system. The way teachers define their roles and functions determines what is done in their classrooms. Ultimately, if teachers do not recognise that they have the power to exercise agency over whom they are, how they teach and what they hope to achieve, then the cycle of disempowerment and failure will continue and society will replicate itself. Consequently, learners become part of an education system that ultimately fails them. As Soudien (2006, 10) observes, learners ‘carry the marks of their history’.

In order to attain the aims of the study, student teachers have to be made aware of the sociological realities found in schools. Only then can the study enable student teachers to become effective and engaged teachers who learn to develop the dispositions and skills that will make them agents of change and in turn help learners grow and develop academically and socially.

This study focusses specifically on student teachers of literature becoming agents of change. *The Collins English Dictionary* (2009) defines ‘becoming’ as potentiality or as any process of change, noting that, according to the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, ‘becoming’ is any change from the lower level of potentiality to the higher level of actuality. Thus, the thesis has to identify the extent to which student teachers of literature in the study change from potentiality to actuality in seeking to become agents of change.

The rest of this chapter introduces the study by delineating its background. It indicates how the study, which is located within practice, fits into the Bachelor of Education programme, and considers the place of English literature in the school curriculum. The chapter then outlines the purpose of the study and highlights key landmark studies related to this study. The research questions are explored, the research process is outlined, the researcher’s role and stance are defined and ethical clearance issues are explained. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2. Background to the study**

Prior to teaching at the university, the researcher was a teacher of English at urban high schools and draws on her experiences of that context in the study. The researcher currently teaches English Education to student teachers (also referred to as pre-service teachers or beginning teachers in some literature) in a School of Education at a university in South

Africa. The student teachers are registered for a four-year Bachelor of Education degree, on the completion of which they may teach at a school.

### **1.2.1. Locating the study in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme**

In a four-year Bachelor of Education programme, student teachers choose a phase that they will teach which could include Foundation (grades one to three), Intermediate (grades four to six), Senior (grades seven to nine), or Further Education and Training (FET) (grades ten to twelve). They then choose subjects, presented in the form of modules, some of which are compulsory (such as Academic Literacy, Professional Studies, Education Studies, Teaching Practice and a second language), some are selected specialisations (such as English Education), some are learning areas (which could be a specialisation subject to be taught in the primary school requiring only two years of study), and some are electives. Each year comprises two semesters and between each semester, students undertake Teaching Practice. In the first-year, it is university-based, in the second-year it is largely lesson-observation and some mentored-teaching, and in the third and fourth years, students teach for four weeks in school classrooms mentored by both teachers and university lecturers.

English Education, the major specialisation within which the study is located, begins in the second year of the degree. Students who are to teach in the foundation and intermediate phases take English Education for two years; students who are to teach in the senior and FET phases take English Education for three years. Students who are to teach in the foundation and intermediate phases also take modules in Language and Literacy; students who are to teach in the senior and FET phases take English Major Method modules. However, all students, irrespective of their phases, take the English Education modules together.

This study focusses on the literature components of the English Education specialisation. Each module comprises four sections, usually taught by different lecturers. In the English Education discipline, student teachers of literature are taught different literary texts and some pedagogical tools to teach texts. However, the lecture-room context is largely confined to face-to-face lectures and even pedagogical tools are largely provided, rather than experienced. While content and pedagogy appear to be covered, albeit using a lecture mode, student teachers are not taught how to make a difference to learners' lives through literature or otherwise, or how to use literature or any other means to address issues that confront learners and their communities on a daily basis. Thus, the power of literature to both transform and empower is often ignored.

In the first year of the study, the researcher worked with third-year students, teaching a three-week section (on the novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior* by Zakes Mda) in the first semester. In the second semester, the researcher taught a two-week section (on the film, *The Colour of Paradise* by Majid Majidi) and a three-week section (on the play, *Sophiatown* by The Junction Avenue Theatre Company). In the second year of the study, the researcher worked with the same students who were now fourth-year students, teaching a three-week section (on the novel, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy) in the first semester. In the second semester, the researcher taught a two-week section (on the film, *Much Ado about Nothing* by Kenneth Branagh) and a three-week section (on the play, *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare).

After the first semester of the fourth year, the researcher worked with a sample of students in their classrooms to assess the impact of the interventions implemented during the study. In the third year of the study, the graduated students, now qualified teachers, were tracked and interviewed to ascertain if the study had any influence on how they taught literature, how they used literature, and how they perceived themselves professionally.

### **1.2.2. Locating literature in the school curriculum**

In the school curriculum, learners study various subjects as determined by the Department of Education (DoE) and the local conditions in the school. According to the various curriculum documents (DoE 2003; DoE 2005; DoE 2011), English may be taken as a home language or as a first additional language. The medium of instruction is determined by the school governing body (made up of parents, teachers and learners) but most South African schools choose to teach and learn through the medium of English (Hugo 2010) or, in some instances, Afrikaans. The medium of instruction determines the language that is used to teach and learn and the language in which assignments, tests and examinations are written. Examination papers of all subjects at the end of grade twelve are written in either English or Afrikaans, except for papers testing a language such as Zulu or Xhosa, for example.

When studying English as a home language or as a first additional language, learners are expected to study aspects of language, a few aspects of media, and literature, according to the DoE curriculum documents (DoE 2003; DoE 2005; DoE 2011). In the classroom, learners have to be exposed to speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing skills. In the literature section, learners engage with poetry, short stories or fables, novels, plays, and films, depending on the resources (in terms of materials and teachers' abilities) available in the

schools. Often, teachers teach texts that are available to them at their schools and thus have no choice in the selection of texts. Many South African schools teach the same texts each year because of cost constraints. Grade twelve texts are prescribed by the DoE and, again, teachers have no choice but to teach the prescribed texts.

Similarly, the study had to work with texts prescribed prior to the researcher being employed at the university and thus text-choice was not a factor in the study. The study's aim was to show that literary texts, irrespective of what they are, can be used to facilitate discussions of change and that issues from texts can serve as catalysts for change. The study works from the premise that the teaching of literature has the potential for deep engagement on many levels and can enable transformation and empowerment in both teachers and learners.

### **1.3. Purpose of this study**

This study is based on the contention that change can begin with how teachers recognise and implement their roles and functions in the school system. For teachers to change, teachers must want to change both their mindsets about how they recognise their roles and their commitment to exposing learners to the extensive possibilities that their education can provide. The education of future teachers in the form of teacher education programmes should equip them to recognise the accountability that accompanies the role of the teacher. This study asserts that teachers have a responsibility to help learners grow and develop both academically and socially. Teachers also have to enable their learners to challenge and confront the stereotypes and constraints that have shaped their lives. Teachers thus have to have agency, serve as agents of change and empower learners to assume agency as well. Equipping teachers to become agents of change should begin in teacher education programmes where student teachers need deep knowledge of their subject matter, innovative pedagogical tools that allow for effective, engaged lessons, and the knowledge and skills to serve as agents of change.

Thus, the central purpose in conducting this study is to determine how student teachers of literature can become agents of change in their classrooms. To realise this purpose, student teachers need to use literature to teach their learners skills that will help them in their scholastic endeavours and in their roles in their communities and societies.

To carry out the study, a system of interventions within participatory action research cycles, was created jointly with third- and fourth-year student teachers in literature classes, and was planned, tested, critically reflected on and theorised. Thus, interventions were designed to

enable student teachers to build their content knowledge and pedagogical skills and to develop agency.

#### **1.4. Landmark cases related to the study**

This study draws and builds on various studies. However, five studies were identified and examined as key studies in the field. While these studies are explored in detail in the literature review, the studies are mentioned at this point to contextualise the research related to the topic of this thesis. The first study, by Cochran-Smith (1991), deliberated the concept ‘teaching against the grain’ and facilitated student teachers becoming agents of change who learnt how to ask questions and challenge assumptions. The second study was that of Kaufman and McDonald (1992) who devised a course that used explicit exploration to teach student teachers how to become agents of change. Zeichner’s (1993) study was used as the third yardstick for the participating student teachers to measure the impact of the study. Zeichner worked with student teachers to examine actions that challenged and supported oppressions and injustices related to class, race, gender, sexual orientation and religion. The fourth study, by Ladson-Billings (1999), developed pedagogic options for student teachers to disrupt racist classroom practices and inequalities. The fifth study by Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken (2003) built on Cochran-Smith’s (1991) study by teaching student teachers how to examine and confront prejudices of their own, other teachers and their schools. They used socio-cultural teaching methods focussed on cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset, and reflected on and linked theory to practice. While this study used many ideas from the studies mentioned, it deviated from the five studies in that this study worked with student teachers of literature and thus engagement with literary texts served as the catalysts for change. In addition, this study used participatory action research in a study that spanned just over two years and drew on six cycles of interventions to answer its research questions.

#### **1.5. Research questions**

The researcher in her capacity as an English Education lecturer was concerned with how teachers use literary texts to empower learners. The concerns were: How does one prepare student teachers to be effective teachers of literature? Should one teach literature in ways that could be used by student teachers in schools? How does one work with student teachers to enable them to draw on the power of literature to effect growth and empowerment in their learners? What does one do to facilitate student teachers of literature becoming agents of

change in their classrooms and what is the most effective and viable conception of the term ‘agent of change’?

The concerns noted above emerged from many visits to student teachers of literature during their Teaching Practice at schools. The researcher observed particular trends in the way most student teachers taught literature. Firstly, they taught in a face-to-face lecture mode (as many of them experienced lectures at university). Secondly, they taught as other teachers in the school taught. The researcher had not tested these assumptions empirically but had gleaned the information from observations and informal discussions with student teachers and their mentor teachers. The assumptions are, however, supported by Lortie’s (1975) and McPherson’s (2000) findings. Thirdly, they taught in the way they themselves were taught during twelve years of schooling. The researcher had also not tested this assumption empirically but had gathered the information from informal discussions with student teachers. However, this assumption is supported by many studies (Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Knowles 1992; Furlong and Maynard 1995; Carter and Anders 1996; Carter and Doyle 1996; Richardson 1996; Griffiths 2000). Fourthly, they avoided topics that they considered controversial, especially issues of power relations, race, gender, sexuality, age and class, even when learners were eager to engage with the issues. (Further, many mentor teachers actively discourage student teachers from engaging in in-depth discussions around the issues). Fifthly, they failed to recognise the power of language in texts.

These trends persist despite student teachers taking English Major Method lectures where they are taught creative, innovative ways of teaching and despite the fact that issues of power relations, race, gender, sexuality, age and class, among others, are engaged with during lectures. Based on the researcher’s observations and the literature that supports such observations, the following overarching question was used to guide the study:

How do student teachers of literature become agents of social and academic change?

The critical sub-questions are:

1. What strategies can be used to prepare student teachers to become effective, engaged teachers of literature?
2. How can student teachers use literature to help their learners develop academically and socially?
3. How can student teachers become agents of academic and social change?

The three research questions serve as the key research points of the study and data is collected specifically to answer the questions and assess the extent to which the student teachers of literature who participate in the study move towards becoming agents of change.

## **1.6. Overview of the research process**

In order to answer the research questions, the study used a critical pedagogy theoretical framework (discussed in chapter two) and was framed by a critical theory research paradigm, a participatory action research design and a qualitative research approach (discussed in chapter three). These choices offered the most relevant, comprehensive, and powerful way of strengthening student teachers' practices, and deepening and transforming their knowledge, so enabling their emancipation and empowerment in their classrooms (Dick 1997; Boog 2003; Whitehead and McNiff 2009). The research process worked as a collaborative process with student teachers as participants, and used a spiral of cycles of observing or discussing behaviour to identify problems, planning how to solve the problems, acting out the intervention, and reflecting on the intervention to identify another problem. The new cycle was determined by the reflections of the previous cycle, and the process continued until participants believed that the concerns of the study were adequately addressed.

After each cycle, qualitative data collection strategies (questionnaires, narrative research, observations, focus groups, interviews, drawings, written work and student evaluations) were used to evaluate the interventions and establish the extent to which participants were moving towards becoming agents of change. A qualitative research approach provided opportunities for participants to explore their experiences of the research process, and allowed for in-depth understanding of findings. Thus, the flexible, fluid nature of qualitative research provided a perfect fit for participatory action research.

## **1.7. Researcher's stance and role**

Participatory action research was new to the researcher and, after much reading on the research, turned to Boog (2003) and Brydon-Miller (2008) for insights into the researcher's stance and role. The researcher learned that when using participatory action research, it is imperative to know the participatory action research processes, communicative methods and techniques, learning methods and techniques, and research methods and techniques. But, the researcher also needs to continue developing her self-knowledge by critically examining her core values, multiple identities, locations of power and privilege, and how these understandings influence interactions with others and with research practices.

Having been a teacher of English at a high school for thirteen years and then lecturing in English Education in a School of Education at a university for nine years (four while on contract and five in a permanent capacity), the researcher understands that her experiences and interactions in those contexts also mould her identity, influence her practices and shape her values. While the researcher needs to see her core values as supportive of her actions, she should be able to re-examine her values and confront the contradictions that emerge as she works through the research process. Constant, honest and mindful reflection is necessary to manage challenges in the research process. To achieve the transformation of student teachers in the study, the researcher has to confirm that she has a truly emancipatory intention and has to ensure that all actions are in the best interests of the student teachers. To foreground the intention, ongoing action and reflection have to occur and extend beyond the participatory action research activity.

In this participatory action research study, the researcher has to acknowledge and enable all participating student teachers to contribute to, shape and co-control the research process and research decisions. The researcher recognises that the research is a collective undertaking influenced by many forces within and beyond the academic institution. For example, there has to be an awareness that the student teachers and the researcher work within their own institutional and community environments, which involve their own sets of values and structures of power.

The issue of power has to be carefully considered in this study when examining how the basic research principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are recognised and located in practice. The researcher has a duty therefore to examine power relationships in the research setting including individual relationships and institutional relationships. In terms of individual relationships, the researcher needs to identify identities, incidents and professional positions that add to or challenge levels of power within the system. There must be an awareness of hierarchies of dominance and privilege, and attentiveness to dynamics of power in group settings. In terms of institutional relationships, the researcher needs to ascertain the sources of power held by institutions and how those sources of power influence the actions of the student teachers. The researcher, who is also an academic, has to understand that she does not work in isolation from the requirements and pressures of the institution. Similarly, the student teachers have to deal with competing claims for their time and energy. In addition, the researcher needs to recognise that all participating student teachers and the researcher exist within wider

social, political and economic structures that shape their experiences of race, gender, class, culture, sexual orientation and other aspects of identity.

The student teachers in the study worked as a collaborative group of investigators who were collectively responsible for the study. The group had to establish a relationship that was based on respect, open communication and commitment to bring about change. The researcher had to model ethical behaviour and had to ensure that her goals were in the best interests of the group, the student teachers had to be respected as active agents of change, and the participatory action research results needed to be accessible and useful to all participants in the research process. The researcher needed to reflect on Hagey's (1997) contention that to secure trustworthy results, participatory action research requires the researcher to have high emotional intelligence, finely-tuned strategies to deal with controversies and good interactive and communication skills.

To obtain trustworthy results, the researcher had to enter the research process with an understanding of the qualitative research approach. She needed to be non-manipulative and open to all data that emerged. The researcher also had to acknowledge that her own personal experiences and insights were important parts of understanding the phenomenon being studied.

In addition, during data collection, empathic neutrality and mindfulness on the part of the researcher were important. In interviews and focus groups, an empathic stance is essential to arrive at a vicarious understanding without judgement. The researcher had to be open, sensitive, respectful, aware and responsive to the student teachers and to their experiences and opinions. In observations, too, the researcher needed to be present and mindful of the dynamics of relationships including the issues of power and hierarchy playing out in the research situation (Johnson and Christensen (2007).

Using an iterative process, the group had to refer back to and reflect on data collected previously. The researcher in this study worked collaboratively with the student teachers in the data analysis, and the group identified recurring themes and patterns that emerged from the data. Further, the group, as qualitative analysts, had to be reflective about their own voices and points of view. Finally, in writing up the thesis, the researcher had to strive to represent the situation and experiences as truthfully as possible, while still being self-analytical and reflexive.

## **1.8. Ethical clearance issues**

The Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal provided full approval for ethical clearance (Protocol Reference Number: HSS/ 0565/ 011D). Gatekeeper permission was sought from the Head of the School of Language, Literacies, Media and Drama Education (now called the Languages and Arts Education Cluster) and permission was granted to conduct the research in the School with the English Education students (See Appendix A: Information Sheet for Head of School in which the study will occur). Information Sheets and Consent Forms were also presented to all participants in the study. They were assured that participation was voluntary, guaranteed total anonymity and confidentiality, and granted the option to leave the study at any time with no consequences to themselves (See Appendix B: Information Sheet for Practising Teachers; Appendix C: Information Sheet for Student Teachers; Appendix D: Information Sheet for Novice Teachers).

## **1.9. Organisation of thesis**

The thesis is organised into seven chapters in order to interpret the findings adequately and answer the research questions. Chapter One introduces the thesis by providing background information to the study and sets out the research questions that need to be answered. Chapter Two examines the theoretical framework that underpins the study, explores the key concepts related to the study and evaluates the research and scholarship relevant to the study. In Chapter Three the methodology used in the study is discussed. The research paradigm, research design and research approach are examined and motivations for their choices are considered. The research site and sample are also described, and the data collection and data analysis strategies are outlined. Chapter Four focusses on the baseline information collected prior to the study itself. Such information is used to determine the course of the study, as is usual in participatory action research. Chapter Five focuses on cycles one, two and three of the research process and these cycles take place in year one of the study. Chapter Six continues from Chapter Five by focussing on cycles four, five and six. Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by appraising the findings and evaluating the theoretical, methodological and practice implications of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

# CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

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## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the theory and concepts that underpin the study, and evaluates the research and scholarship relevant to the study. To engage with the topic, the chapter will first provide a description and evaluation of critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework that underpins the study. Secondly, the chapter will define, discuss and assess the key concepts of agency, agents of change and change agency. Thirdly, the chapter will locate the study in the South African schooling context, appraise various studies aimed at understanding teachers as agents of change, and review the research that identifies strategies used by effective, engaged teachers. Fourthly, the chapter will consider research that assesses strategies used by teachers to help students develop academically and socially, and will evaluate the use of literature to make a difference in the classroom. Fifthly, the chapter will appraise the research and scholarship that focusses on programmes and courses designed to prepare student teachers to become agents of change. The chapter will conclude by considering broader concerns in the fields of teacher education and higher education.

## 2.2. Theoretical framework

In English Education lectures, lecturers and students may use many literary theories in the study of literature. Such theories, which are not prescriptive, include, among others, practical criticism, marxism, feminism, reader response, new historicism, cultural materialism, and postcolonialism. While the lectures in this study use a variety of literary theories to engage with the texts, the primary theory underpinning the teaching and learning in the researcher's literature lecture-room is critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is a set of diverse principles founded on the possibility of transformation, and has a critical nature and liberating function. There is no set method for the implementation of critical pedagogy, and all conjecture, assumptions and claims of truth are open to review (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). This theory (which is part of the framework of critical theory), posits that education should be understood in its socio-historical and political context, and should commit itself to transformation towards justice, equality, democracy and freedom (Giroux 1983; Biesta and Tedder 2007; Giroux 2009).

Freire, deemed by many (e.g. Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009) to be the most significant educational theorist in the development of critical pedagogical philosophy, theory and praxis, turned the ideas and ideals of critical theory into critical pedagogy so that teachers and lecturers might be able to use the pedagogy in their classrooms (Freire 1970). Critical theory understands the lecture-room as a location where new knowledge is produced through active engagement and dialogue, grounded in the experiences of students and lecturers alike, and is culturally relevant, socially empowering and participant-driven (Ellsworth 1989; Lather 1998; Giroux 2009).

Freire credits the beginnings of his ideas to Dewey who notes that school and society should be based on collaborations and democratic sharing of resources and power (Shor 2009). In this study, the researcher and student teachers grappled with Dewey's assertion that education can function either to create passive, risk-free citizens or a citizenry informed by a concern for justice, happiness and equality (Giroux 2009). Building on Dewey's ideas, Freire locates education within a larger social context and focusses on issues of power, control, culture and oppression within the educational context. For Freire, critical pedagogy should be used to highlight issues of agency, voice and democratic participation (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). Since this study is intrinsically concerned with agency, voice and democratic participation, critical pedagogy is a clear choice with which to underpin the research. Freire (1970) insists that teachers and students should be agents actively engaged in the process of constructing meaning together. Freire notes that,

the role of an educator who is pedagogically and critically radical is to avoid being indifferent. The radical educator has to be an active presence in educational practice. But, educators should never allow their active and curious presence to transform the students' presence into a shadow of the educator's presence. Nor can educators be a shadow of their students. The educator who dares to teach has to stimulate students to live a critically conscious presence in the pedagogical and historical process (1970, 202).

Other theorists who shaped the development of critical pedagogy include Gramsci, Foucault and the Frankfurt School, among others. Gramsci (1971; 1992) maintains that leaders of society, including teachers, use a process of social control or hegemony to support shared common suppositions of truth. McLaren (2009) defines hegemony as the process where the dominant culture is allowed to dominate subordinate groups. The domination is not through force but through consensual social practices (what people say and do), consensual social forms (principles that give legitimacy to social practices) and consensual social structures

(constraints that limit an individual's life such as the economic or class structures) in schools, media, religious sites, state, and political systems, among others. In educational institutions, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) note, consensual social practices, forms and structures are internalised by students through the discourses and messages found in every-day, often insignificant, practices.

Thus, according to Bourdieu and Passeron, teachers model and use values, performance expectations, actions and manners to preserve the interests of those in power. The cultural capital of teachers is emphasised and if students' cultural capital coincides with their teachers', it is reinforced. But, if students' cultural capital is contrary to the teacher's cultural capital, students' capital is negated. In other words, students are rewarded if they support the values espoused by the teacher and school even if such values contradict their interests. In addition, students internalise and replicate the cultural messages of the institution, thus perpetuating the ideological cycle. In this study, the observations by Bourdieu and Passeron needed to serve as constant reminders to the researcher and student teachers to reflect on whose cultural capital is being valued and whose cultural capital is being ignored.

Critical pedagogy therefore urges teachers to focus on hegemony in terms of how it functions, to expose and critique structures that perpetuate the interests of those in power, and to engage with ways in which hegemonic practices may be challenged and overcome. Thus, teachers need to provide skills to and spaces for the voices and experiences of those who have been denied agency. Ultimately, critical pedagogy aims to transform classroom structures and practices that uphold undemocratic ideals (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). However, teachers (and all participants in this study) need to be aware that pressure may be placed on those who challenge the teaching and learning status quo (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009).

Like Gramsci, Foucault (1970; 1980) questions the ideas of what is presented as truth. Foucault focusses on how certain knowledges are supported and legitimated within power-relationships in society. Foucault engages with the notions of power being used to construct knowledge and to dominate less powerful groups. In other words, Foucault points out that power could be an enabling as well as a constraining force. Foucault also focusses much of his observation and writing on creative acts of resistance. Foucault believes that in the teaching and learning context, creative acts of resistance may lead to change and transformation.

Like Freire, Gramsci and Foucault, the Frankfurt School comprising Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas (among others) is pivotal in shaping the development of critical pedagogy. The Frankfurt School believes that theory and practice need to inform the work of those who want to transform oppressive conditions in the world. Giroux (2009, 28) describes the Frankfurt School as having developed a framework to understand ‘the mediations that link the institutions and activities of everyday life with the logic and commanding forces that shape the larger social totality’. The Frankfurt School sought to create a society where all facets of people’s lives such as work, play, love and sexuality, among others, work towards supporting a free society (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). In terms of education specifically, the Frankfurt School focusses on the roles that educational institutions play as agents of social and cultural reproduction. The Frankfurt School engages with the relationship between power and culture in education, and recognises educational institutions as sites in which conflicting political ideals, histories and traditions operate. Educational institutions are thus expressions of the wider organisation of society (Giroux 2009).

The Frankfurt School emphasises the importance of critical thinking in striving for self-emancipation and social change. An important aspect of critical thinking is historical consciousness, which is required to acquire forms of critical analysis and appraisal that elucidate the interaction of personal and social experiences as well as private experiences and history (Giroux 2009). The Frankfurt School notes the importance of ‘subjectivity, consciousness and culture in history’ (Breines 1979, 80) and highlights the need to affirm people’s histories ‘through the use of language, social relations and body of knowledge that critically reconstructs and dignifies the cultural experiences that make up the tissue, texture, and history of their daily lives’ (Giroux 2009, 47).

Critical pedagogy highlights the idea that the historical situation shapes students. Similarly, knowledge is created and shaped within a historical period under specific historical circumstances. Critical pedagogy appeals to teachers to set up opportunities for students to recognise themselves as subjects of history and to acknowledge that human beings can transform situations of injustice. In other words, teachers must actively work to bring about change in their students’ worlds. Students, too, need to be empowered to recognise that they have agency to confront ideas and traditions that emphasise historical continuities. Critical pedagogy thus focusses on human agency and on possibilities for change (Giroux 1983; Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009), two important constructs within this research study. In addition, this study also needs to consider continuities within histories that are suppressed, as

in South Africa, where recovery of cultures and traditions is an important part of the healing and empowerment process post-apartheid.

In order to engage with concepts such as agency, healing and empowerment, critical pedagogy advocates dialectical thought as central to social inquiry (McLaren 1989; Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009; Giroux 2009). Dialectical thinking

is an open and questioning form of thinking which demands reflection back and forth. In the process, contradictions may be discovered. As contradictions are revealed, new constructive thinking and new constructive action are required to transcend the contradictory state of affairs (Carr and Kemmis 1983, 36-37).

Teachers using a critical pedagogy framework acknowledge the dialectical nature of society in general and of education in particular (McLaren 2009). They recognise that the educational challenges are part of the interactive environment between the individual and society, and the individual constructs and is constructed by the social environment. Dialogue and conscientisation, too, are identified as important aspects of critical pedagogy and focus on the development of critical social consciousness (Freire 1999). In an educational institution, the use of dialogue is aimed at empowering students through engaging with and confronting the prevailing educational discourse. For critical pedagogy, dialogue and enquiry underpin reflection and action, and support a problem-posing approach to education. The relationship of students to teacher is dialogical and each contributes and receives in the educational experience. All experiences should be acknowledged and understood, especially in how the experiences might be different. Conscientisation is the means by which students gain an awareness of the experiences which influence their lives and realise their own abilities to repeat, revise or transform them (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). Thus, education is a catalyst for empowering students to become critical, active citizens (Giroux and McLaren 1996) and 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux 1988, 122).

For student teachers of literature to become transformative intellectuals, they need to combine scholarly reflection and practice so that they will make their students critical, active citizens working towards equality in turn (Giroux 1988). But, it is difficult to address the issue of equality unless one has a picture of society's current unequal cultural, economic and political dynamics (Apple 1989). hooks (2009, 135) specifically highlights class, and notes that 'nowhere is there more intense silence about the reality of class differences than in educational settings'. hooks points out that class relates to more than just money. Class shapes 'values, attitudes, social relations, and the biases that inform the way knowledge will be given

and received' (hooks 2009, 136). Thus, the cultural, economic and political dynamics of this research context and the broader contexts in which it resides need to be highlighted.

Specifically in terms of this study, the researcher has to bear in mind that for student teachers to become agents of academic and social change, they must be open to questioning existing norms and learning how to take a stance (Giroux and McLaren 1996). They have to resist being technicians who transmit knowledge (Dillard 1997; Giroux 1988; Giroux and McLaren 1996; Leistyna and Woodrum 1996; Sleeter and Grant 1999) and, instead, must critically examine the world and the processes that maintain social inequalities, and then work towards transforming them (Apple 1989; Delpit 1995; Ladson-Billings 1995). Students need to be encouraged to examine knowledge to ascertain how it represents, misrepresents, marginalises or mediates particular views and social realities. They need to recognise that while knowledge may distort reality, it also provides the basis for understanding the conditions that inform everyday life. Ultimately, they will realise that knowledge, while never neutral or objective, is historically and socially rooted, ordered and structured in specific ways, and that some forms of knowledge have more power and legitimacy than others (McLaren 2009).

McLaren (2009, 63) invites teachers using critical pedagogy to ask some of the following questions: Whose interests does this knowledge serve? Who is excluded or marginalised as a result? What is the relationship between social class and knowledge taught at schools? How does school knowledge reinforce stereotypes about women, minorities, and disadvantaged peoples? Why do we learn about the great men of history and spend less time on the contributions of women and minorities and the struggles of people in lower economic classes? What accounts for some knowledge having high status (for example, the works of scientists and philosophers) while the practical knowledge of ordinary people or marginalised or subjugated groups are often discredited and devalued? How and why are certain types of knowledge used to reinforce dominant ideologies, which in turn serve to mask unjust power relations among certain groups in society?

Each of the questions mentioned was used as a discussion point in the course of the research study. The researcher draws on Breunig's (2009) suggestion that researchers using a critical pedagogy approach need to develop strategies that specifically address the justice-orientated nature that the theory espouses together with the facilitation strategies that support it.

McLaren (2009) points out the need for teachers adopting a critical pedagogy approach to recognise the diverse knowledges that education may embrace. Habermas (1972) identifies

technical knowledge and practical knowledge as the types most used in educational institutions. Technical knowledge can be calculated and measured, and is used to organise, classify and regulate. Practical knowledge is attained through describing and examining social conditions and settings from a developmental and historical basis, and is used to understand events and judge actions and interactions. The teacher using a critical pedagogy uses emancipatory knowledge (Habermas 1972) or directive knowledge (Giroux 1988) which aims to understand how relationships are controlled by aspects of power and advantage. Such knowledge aims at establishing conditions where forms of oppression may be surmounted through well-thought-out action and creates the basis for social justice and empowerment.

In addition, Giroux (2009) suggests that teachers allow students to draw on their own voices and histories as the basis for engaging with and interrogating the various experiences they will encounter. In terms of the curriculum, McLaren (2009) urges teachers using a critical pedagogical approach to be aware of the way narratives, portrayals and representations in textbooks and literary texts, curriculum materials, course content, and social relations found in classroom practices advantage dominant groups and disadvantage subordinate ones.

Ultimately, teachers using a critical pedagogy aim for a better life for all by building a society based on fair, non-exploitative relations and social justice. However, the ideal place to enable teachers to explore a critical pedagogical approach is in their teacher education programmes.

Teacher education is an important space in which students are socialised and tutored into pedagogical stances and procedures that either maintain or confront the power dynamics in society (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). Teacher education programmes either serve and reproduce the existing society or adopt a critical role of challenging the social order to develop and advance its democratic requirements (Giroux 2009). When classroom life is discussed in teacher education programmes, students are usually given a set of rules and practices. Students get the idea that classrooms are neutral spaces, free of differences, contradictions and ambiguities, and issues of class, race, gender and power are discussed very superficially, if at all. It is only when students engage in teaching practice at schools that they realise the reality of the schooling situation. Thus, teacher education programmes should focus on the critical transformation of schools rather than the simple duplication of existing structures and ideologies. Once the affirmative nature of critical pedagogy is established, it becomes possible for students who have been conventionally voiceless to learn the skills, knowledge, and modes of inquiry that will allow them to critically examine the role society has played in their lives and to lead to their own self-transformation.

However, there are critiques of critical pedagogy as a theory and in its application. The first is voiced by feminist theorists such as Ellsworth and Gore who believe that critical pedagogy confronts patriarchy in a cursory, shallow manner. They maintain that critical pedagogy should use personal biographies and narratives, should rethink the idea of authority, and should make very explicit the links between issues of the historical and political, and issues of patriarchy. Ellsworth (1989) points out that the beliefs, aims and practices of critical pedagogy are repressive myths that enable domination. In her study, Ellsworth found that implementing the principles of critical pedagogy intensified the problems she had hoped to address because the principles did not take into account specific contexts, situations and identities. According to Ellsworth, critical pedagogy also fails to address power imbalances and paternalism in educational institutions, and empowerment and dialogue provide an illusion of equality while maintaining rigid hierarchical structures. In addition, Gore (1993) notes that it was White middle-class men who initially formulated critical pedagogy and their specific perspectives colour its foundational texts.

The second criticism deals with the language of critical pedagogy, arguing that it is an elitist language that creates additional oppression. What is required is a discussion in plain, candid language on issues of literacy, class, gender, culture and power. Further, the use of the masculine pronoun in early writings is severely criticised. The third criticism is that critical pedagogy fails to treat race and culture as central concerns (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). The fourth criticism is that individual reflections and expressions are advantaged and community knowledge is disregarded (Bowers 1987). Bowers notes that critical pedagogy is based on western values and assumptions about freedom and equality and that the use of dialogue as an instrument of emancipation moves ‘the locus of authority from that of community and tradition to the individual’ (Bowers 1987, 127). Further, Gur-Ze’ev (1998) points out that critical pedagogy is dependent on assumptions that are not possible in non-western settings. Yoon (2005), too, concludes that critical pedagogy is one of affect that calls on teachers to promote or uphold western ideals. Yoon notes that critical pedagogy is not necessarily emancipatory but can serve exclusionary and conservative ends.

A fifth criticism focusses on the fact that while there is a large body of literature on critical pedagogy, there is a dearth of information on how lecturers could apply this theory to the practices in their lecture-rooms (Breunig 2009). hooks (2009, 136) notes an even greater problem when she says that, ‘even those professors who embrace the tenets of critical pedagogy still conduct their classrooms in a manner that only reinforces bourgeois models of

decorum'. Gore (1993) asserts that a few critical pedagogy theorists such as Freire and Shor provide tangible ideas and models from their own pedagogical practices to help other teachers and to contribute to pedagogical practice. However, Gore is critical of theorists such as Giroux and McLaren who espouse theoretical concepts but fail to provide practices for use in classrooms. The final critique of critical pedagogy emanates from critical pedagogy theorists, Giroux and McLaren (1995) who point out that persons using critical pedagogy tend to concentrate on the aspect of critique without understanding the theoretical underpinnings of the process.

All the criticisms are legitimate and needed to be grappled with by the researcher and student teachers in this study. They also needed to identify how to engage with critical pedagogy and its possible limitations within the context of the study. As Freire (1999) reminds us, critical pedagogy principles exist and should be open to reinvention. Freire asks teachers to take cognisance of students' realities and to construct teaching and learning strategies that resonate with students' experiences. This study, while attempting to apply critical pedagogy principles to the English Education lecture-room to enable student teachers of literature to become agents of change, had to test its claims and determine both its value and limitations in the research process. In addition, the terms 'agency', 'agents of change' and 'change agency' (also called 'change agency' in some literature) are used throughout the study and thus require definition and discussion.

### **2.3. Discussion of key terms: *Agency, change agency and agents of change***

#### **2.3.1. Agency**

There are many ways to define *agency*, but for the purposes of this study agency refers to people's ability, competence and power to 'critically shape their responses to problematic situations' (Biesta and Tedder 2006, 11). Agency is achieved through a combination of factors, including individual efforts and capacities to act, available resources, and contextual factors as they come together in specific situations. Thus, the study had to be aware that people may effect more or less agency at different times and in different places (Archer 2000; Biesta and Tedder 2007) and the enactment of agency is therefore determined by experiences, events and contexts in which people may find themselves.

Campbell et al. (2009) identify four types of agency. The first is interpersonal agency that emphasises collegial engagement, advocacy, moral responsibility and commitment. In a school or tertiary situation, the teacher would institute changes for and with students who do

not usually have a voice in what happens in their educational lives. The teacher is thus their voice until they can speak for themselves. The environment in which interpersonal agency is played out is characterised by trust, building relationships, working in teams and respecting students' views. It was hoped that by the end of the study, participating student teachers would be equipped to effect interpersonal agency.

The second type of agency is professional agency where the person is committed to the ideals of the profession. In an educational institution, this could result in providing effective engaged teaching that makes a difference to the lives of students, and acting in a professionally competent and ethical manner, attributes towards which participating student teachers endeavoured.

The third type of agency is institutional agency that identifies who has authority to change and how change is negotiated. Ideally, one should be able to align oneself with the ethos, culture, interests and values of an institution. The challenge arises when there is a clash of values. Potential change agents may feel powerless to create meaningful change and institutions could resist change.

The final type of agency is societal agency that builds on interpersonal and institutional agencies. This type of agency occurs where the change agent sees beyond the immediate environment to see how change contributes to a larger, more significant societal influence. In an educational situation, societal agency involves dealing with more than just the content of lessons. It requires knowing students and their contexts, recognising and working with high-risk students and students who lack basic needs or who reside in conflict situations. Teachers and participating student teachers need to be aware that societal agency is very demanding on many levels.

### **2.3.2. Change agency**

In this study, student teachers understand *change agency* as a process in which 'we play a dynamic and crucial role in shaping our own structures and processes whether we are aware of doing this or not' (Herda 1999, 25). Change agency thus means being aware of the unpredictable and unstable nature of change and the change process, while remaining committed to pursuing ideas to achieve a desired set of outcomes (Stager and Fullan 1992; Fullan 1993).

Priestley et al. (2012) caution researchers about factors that question the effectiveness of change agency. They note that change agency is portrayed as positive and yet may be used for

purposes that are detrimental to the participants. For example, teachers might not be able to achieve agency with an over-regulated curriculum and prescriptive testing procedures. In this study, it is essential for student teachers to analyse the concepts of change and change agency. It is also important that they interrogate the challenges and potentialities of the concepts while making a commitment to becoming agents of change.

### **2.3.3. Agents of change**

Priestly et al. (2012) found that agents of change are reflexive and creative and are committed to pursuing and embracing possibilities for change even in the face of obstacles. In order to effect change, change agents have to have the knowledge and skills to create improvements (Miller 2002). This study contends that if student teachers of literature can use their literary texts in their classrooms as springboards to empower their learners to change academically and socially, then they will serve as agents of change.

Effective change agents have a moral purpose, democratic principles and a clear vision of why they are teachers. They are committed to improving and making a difference to their own lives and those of their students and colleagues through interventions. Through learning and reflection, they are conversant with and able to view the interventions from multiple perspectives, have various plans for implementation, and are familiar with the benefits of the interventions. They recognise that implementing change works effectively if executed collaboratively, and understand that a synergy of people, resources, and activities interact to achieve change. To this end, change agents understand the need to be honest, realistic and empathetic when working with others. With an understanding that change is unstable and unpredictable, effective change agents are flexible, organised and proactive when faced with unexpected outcomes (Fullan and Stager 1992; Harada and Hughes-Hassell 2007; Lunenburg 2010). While the description of an effective change agent may seem daunting, it does serve as a guideline to student teachers who want to become agents of change. Even if not all aspects are achievable, the guideline serves as a measure from which to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

In the educational context, it is important for teachers to enable their students to develop their full capacities as individuals, become self-determining and have a sense of their own agency (Adams et al. 2007). It is equally important for teachers to enable their students to be interdependent, capable of interacting democratically with others, and have a sense of responsibility towards others, towards society, and towards the broader world. If teachers

strive for empowerment and transformation, they will need to ground their decisions using social justice as a compass. Herda (1999, 91) offers this summary of a potential change agent who wants to implement change and make a difference:

The first (response) is to change our notion of action from one grounded in behaviourism (that is, stimulus/ response) to one grounded in moral decisions, and the second is to change our idea of professional identity.

Like Herda (1991), Francis and le Roux (2011) and Newman (1997) draw attention to the way a teacher's professional identity is created by and inextricably linked to personal identity (which comprises multiple identities and thus makes the teacher unique), and social identity (which locates the teacher in the social world, context and the roles teachers play in schools). Further, the social world and the social group, comprising race, class, gender, language, and age, among others, mediate identity. Thus, the dynamics of identities need to be borne in mind when working with student teachers of literature becoming agents of change.

However, Caldwell (2003) cautions persons working with or as agents of change to be aware of the limitations of the change agent role. Caldwell points out that most theories and models of change agency are appropriate for planned change that comes about in a rational, linear manner, with stable institutions and adequate resources and time to implement it. Theories assume that the change agent can enable consensus on change that is presented as something typical, normal and stable, whereas, in fact it might hide power relations, vested interests and complex group dynamics. It can thus be seen that becoming an agent of change is a complex and often-difficult process. Consequently, all student teachers embarking on the research study needed to be equipped with an understanding of the concepts, processes and theories of change.

#### **2.3.4. Models and theories**

Kritsonis (2005) and Cummings and Worley (2005) recognise Lewin's (1951) Change Model as a primary theory from which others draw. Lewin identifies three steps in moving towards change. The first is what he refers to as 'unfreezing', where behaviour maintaining the *status quo* is reduced. The aim is to move the existing behaviour towards change. In an educational situation, this would mean motivating students, preparing them for change, building trust and recognition for change, recognising problems in implementing change and finding solutions. The second step involves 'movement' where interventions are used to develop new behaviours, values and attitudes. The change must be recognised as beneficial to the group.

The third step, called 're-freezing' by Lewin, is where the new norms, values and culture are stabilised and reinforced. While Lewin's model may be considered compact and useful, it assumes smooth transitions of change. Lewin's concept of re-freezing is perhaps especially problematic in that it considers change as something static. According to Lewin's theory, behaviour could thus be changed and then fixed as a new behaviour, whereas change is in fact complex and dynamic and it is difficult to believe that any behaviour can be subjected to re-freezing. Nevertheless, in an educational situation, the overarching principles of Lewin's model could be applicable in dealing with social problems in the institution, in changing students' attitudes and responses to a literary text, for example, or in facilitating student teachers becoming agents of change. As with most models and theories, student teachers in the study needed to be critically aware in their adoption of Lewin's or any other theories.

The Lippitt, Watson and Westley Seven-Step Model of Change Theory (1958) focusses on the change agent (Kritsonis 2005). According to the model, the change agent needs to diagnose the problem, assess the motivation and capacity for change, develop strategies, understand the change agent's role, maintain the change by feedback, and work towards using the change to alter the institution's culture. A variation of the Lippitt, Watson and Westley model (1958) is the Prochaska and DiClemente Five-Step Model of Change Theory (Kritsonis 2005). This theory identifies the stages in which change occurs. The first stage is pre-contemplation where there is no acknowledgement of the need to change. Contemplation is the second stage where the potential change agent thinks about changing a particular behaviour. Thereafter, during the third stage, preparation, the change agent is ready to change and looks for support and assistance to solve problems. The fourth stage is the action stage where the change agent has to cope with introducing change activities and implementing behaviour changes. The final stage is maintenance where the change agent uses actions to establish new behaviours and reinforce the change. This theory emphasises the idea that should the change process stop at any time, it may start again empowered with insights from the previous experiences. The Lippitt, Watson and Westley Seven Step Model of Change Theory and the Prochaska and DiClemente Five Step Model of Change Theory provide a series of useful steps or stages for teachers and student teachers who want to implement change.

The Social Learning or Cognitive Theory (Kritsonis 2005) takes the discussion a little further. This theory notes that change is influenced by environmental and personal influences, and individuals learn by direct experiences, dialogue, interaction and observations. An agent of change in an educational institution, for example, has to convince students of their capacity to

change, and students should recognise the values implicit in the change. While the teacher has to be clear about the objectives of the process, s/he should also enable skills-building and should model the desired behaviour. In addition, the students relate to the teacher because s/he highlights how the change can benefit students. The teacher is also successful if s/he provides effective, engaging lessons that capture the attention and interest of the students.

The Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour (Kritsonis 2005) identifies two factors that shape an individual's attention to change. The first factor is that the individual's attitude to the behaviour must be positive for change to occur. The second factor is that the social environment, including the individual's peers and personal motivation, shapes and influences the individual's attention and thus determines the degree to which change will be possible.

While the Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour focusses on the individual's positive attitude as a pre-requisite for change, the Positive Model focusses on the attributes of a system that produces positive outcomes and expectations (Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva 1995). This model occurs in five phases: identifying instances of positive outcomes; gathering information about best practices in the system; discovering the common themes that represent the basis for moving from 'what is' to 'what could be'; envisioning a preferred future as a collective group and identifying the stakeholders and critical processes to support the envisioned future; and designing activities to bring about the vision (Cummings and Worley 2005). However, while the focus is on the system's role in bringing about change, the change agent is ultimately responsible for implementing the change.

### **2.3.5. Implementing change**

Drawing on Foucault's (1992) idea that all knowledges and actions are culturally and historically relative, one realises that persons implementing change have to consider the contexts within which the change is implemented. Wedell's (2003) study of educational change processes found that while the change process was supported by resources, the change process did not consider who the teachers were, the classroom practices with which they were familiar, and the contexts in which they worked. The teachers also did not know why the changes being implemented were important and they had no input into the planning and design of the changes. They therefore did not buy into the change process. In a similar study, Todd (2005) recognised that implementers of change needed to consider context specific issues when implementing educational curriculum changes and when evaluating the

effectiveness of such changes. Todd notes that traditional top-down approaches to change implementation are largely unsuccessful and instead proposes immanent change, where there is recognition that the need for change and the development of ideas for change must emerge from the local context.

With a clear understanding of the need to effect changes with the local environment, the change agent, who could be a teacher, student or both, needs to recognise the main types of strategies for change. They include power-coercive, rational-empirical and normative-re-educative strategies (Chin and Benne 1970). Power-coercive strategies are used by people in power to force change. These strategies are based on sanctions and as expected, usually do not succeed unless public opinion supports and enforces them. An example of such a strategy is prescribing a textbook that ignores the contexts in which it is to be used. Rational-empirical strategies work on the assumption that change will occur if people see evidence of its benefits. These strategies rely on people being given information for example, via seminars and newsletters. Normative-re-educative strategies use collaborative, problem-solving approaches to decision making about the changes to be implemented. Such strategies work with people collectively accepting the need for change and deciding on ways forward. Such strategies take into account that change might require altering strongly held beliefs and behaviour.

In addition to a clear understanding of the various definitions, models and strategies associated with becoming agents of change, the researcher and participating student teachers had to understand the contextual dynamics within which the change was being implemented. In this study, it was essential that all participants had a clear understanding of the South African schooling context.

#### **2.4. The South African schooling context**

Knowledge of the educational context informs the need for student teachers to become agents of change and with what they will need to empower themselves in order to become agents of change. The South African education system is known to be challenging in many ways and participants in the study needed to be aware of the demands of their profession (Bloch 2009; Kumar 2010). As Vavi (2011,1) notes,

Our education is in a crisis. In fact calling it a crisis is an understatement. This is a catastrophe. Every day children of the working class and the poor are being condemned into a deep black hole with minimal chances of escape.

While one cannot discount some improvements made to the South African schooling system in some areas of infrastructure, distribution of books, enrolment of children, education of the girl-child, and improving poor children's access to education, these improvements, in the main, have not helped to produce academic and social changes in the system (Vavi 2011). The South African schooling context is often described as severely dysfunctional and calls for changes are common (Kumar 2010). This thesis contends that if the teacher in the South African classroom serves as an agent of change, some solutions to the crisis are possible.

Like Vavi, Bloch (2009) identifies a crisis of immense proportions in the South African school system. While he acknowledges the faults or omissions of government, administrators and society in handling the problems in education, he points out that the teacher has to deal with the crisis. The Centre for Development and Enterprise's (CDE) (2011) report acknowledges that there are indeed good teachers in public schools who deliver results against immense difficulties, but it also found that South Africa needs many more and much better teachers in its schools. Overall, teacher education should enable student teachers to become better teachers by facilitating programmes that help them understand the extent of the crisis in South African education and the possible roles they could play in effecting changes to the system. Going into their careers prepared to meet the challenges can increase the retention of effective engaged teachers in the profession.

In a study of twenty one thousand three hundred and fifty-eight teachers from one thousand seven hundred and fourteen schools, fifty-five percent of teacher respondents said that if they had the chance they would leave the teaching profession (HSRC 2005). Their reasons include poor pay, increased workloads, lack of career prospects, lack of professional recognition, dissatisfaction with work policies and job insecurity. In addition, teachers have deficient subject and pedagogic knowledge as revealed by the National Planning Commission's study in 2008, which found that teachers scored less than the minimum scores expected from the average learner in the subjects that they taught (Kumar 2010).

One key concern of teachers in South Africa today, nineteen years after the demise of legislated apartheid, is the implementation of the post-apartheid curriculum (Soudien 2010). While the curriculum aims to redress the legacy of apartheid, it favours privilege and entrenches inequity against black and indigent children (Soudien 2010). Teachers also lack material resources to traverse a complex, overloaded curriculum that works best with small

classes rather than the large numbers found in most South African classrooms of which the majority are working-class students (Hugo 2010).

Working-class students are exposed to a deficient education system and lack resources such as libraries, laboratories, and learner-support materials (Vavi 2011). Three studies by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality found the biggest gap in reading scores between rich and poor grade six students from South Africa (SACMEQ 2010). Such facts have to be considered when designing teacher education programmes that often assume there are resources such as libraries and support materials whereas seventy percent of South African schools have no libraries (Vavi 2011). The reality in South Africa is that the teacher is the primary resource and must thus be empowered differently to make a difference to students' lives.

Bloch (2009) notes that surveys among students in South Africa indicate that while they have hopes and dreams for the future, awareness of the obstacles confronting them leads to sixty percent of students dropping out of the school system before grade twelve (Vavi 2011) and thirty-two percent failing to proceed beyond grade ten. The result is that education is failing most children in South Africa (Bloch 2009). In addition, fewer than fifty percent of all matriculants will hold a formal job before they turn twenty four, three million people between the ages of fifteen and twenty four are not studying or working (HSRC 2010), and one in five South Africans between the ages of sixteen to eighteen is not in school. Of the last statistic, approximately thirty-three percent are Coloured, twenty percent are Indian, fifteen percent are African, and thirteen percent are White. Reasons cited for dropping out of school include poverty, education that is useless or uninteresting, and failure to do well in school (DoE 2010). It is therefore no wonder that the National Planning Commission found that eighty-eight percent of South African schools are dysfunctional (Kumar 2010). This thesis contends that if teachers are empowered to make a difference to students' lives, there is a possibility that some students will remain at school.

The situation is compounded by the large numbers of students who are malnourished and in poor health despite a school nutrition programme being in place. Malnutrition and poor health impair cognitive capacity, impinge on concentration, and contribute to antisocial behaviour (Abadzi 2006). Beset by poverty, orphan-hood and violence, sometimes the only place where students get any refuge is at school. However, teachers are not trained to deal with the

complex demands that are made on them, and the dysfunctionality continues (Bhana, Morrell, Epstein and Moletsane 2006).

The dysfunctionality is exacerbated by the choice of most South African schools to use English as the medium of teaching and learning. While research indicates that initial learning should occur in the mother-tongue, schools choose to ignore such findings, resulting in students being unable to read in their home languages and experiencing great difficulties reading and learning in English (Hugo 2010). Mgqwashu (2007, 122) notes that ‘most South African learners from Black township schools receive very poor exposure to English in environments un conducive to effective learning’. The student teachers involved in the study had therefore to be aware of the literacy challenges faced by their students and needed to be prepared to go into the classroom armed with strategies to make a difference to students’ lives.

The South African school context presents a host of other challenges as well: teacher absenteeism; poor school leadership; teacher union disruptions; time wasted at school; acceptance of a culture of mediocrity; lack of parental involvement; little or no accountability for performance demanded by government; corporal punishment; drug use by students; violence in schools; high grade-repetitions; students older than the age-grade norms; students missing a year and then returning; lack of systematic routines and racialised inequalities (Jansen 2011).

Even though South Africa is vastly superior to many other countries in terms of resources and infrastructure, South African students score among the lowest in tests for reading, literacy, numeracy and science. This is reflected in the 1990, 2002 and 2007 tests conducted by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), and in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) figures for 1994 and 1998 (Van der Berg 2005). In the Annual National Assessment survey, the national average for literacy in grade three was thirty-five percent (ANA 2011), and in reading tests twelve-year-olds in South Africa perform three times worse than eleven-year-olds in Russia (Vavi 2011). Of particular concern for this study were the poor literacy scores that emerged from these various surveys. The study had to confront the reality of the results and determine strategies to improve a dysfunctional situation.

Yet, while South Africa has one of the least productive education systems in its region, spending on education is in line with international fiscal norms and much higher than those of

any other African country. For the 2012-2013 year, the government was set to spend two hundred and seven billion rands on education, with projections that the figure might rise to two hundred and thirty-six billion rands over the next three years. These Tables translate to just over five percent of gross domestic product and twenty percent of total state expenditure ([www.southafrica.info](http://www.southafrica.info)). South Africa also spends more money on teacher education than any other African country, yet teachers and principals appear to lack the required knowledge to improve learning and teaching and influence academic and social change (Jansen 2011).

The South African school system appears to be locked into a structure that is controlled by the capacity and performance of its teachers (CDE 2011). This cannot be heartening to students who have aspirations of a better life for themselves (Chisholm 2004; Soudien 2005; Jansen 2004; Bloch 2009) and who look to their teachers to help them attain their goals. Vavi (2011, 2) asserts that 'Every child and every human being develops from the tutelage of teachers, who therefore occupy a special role in our quest to change the world'. In order to change the state of education in South Africa, teachers need to be convinced that they can be agents of change, playing a crucial role in moulding students' lives and making a difference to their futures. In this study, student teachers recognised the possibility of working to achieve such a goal.

## **2.5. Teachers as agents of change**

This thesis takes the position that teachers hold the key to changing students' worlds and teachers must thus be empowered to make a difference in students' academic and social lives. Taylor and Wasicsko (2000, 193) point out that

There is a significant body of research indicating that teachers' attitudes, values, and beliefs about students, about teaching, and about themselves, strongly influence the impact they will have on student learning and development.

While many teachers start their careers wanting to make a difference to the academic and social lives of their students, they feel a 'sense of inconsequentiality' as they move through their careers and face difficulties surrounding teaching, values, vulnerabilities, social pressures and personal issues (Farber 1991, 36). When stakeholders look to improve education and make a difference in schools, they invariably focus on finding funds and physical resources. While such factors do alleviate some difficulties, they do not consider the teacher as being crucial to solving problems. Very little attention is paid to developing competent teachers (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken 2003). Moreover, 'schools do not

change if the people within the schools, particularly the teaching staff, do not change' (Creemers and Reezigt 2005, 365). Likewise, 'if educational reform is to be systematically and effectively managed, the roles of teachers need to be fully recognised and incorporated into the reform process' (Calderhead 2001, 797). Perhaps teachers in South Africa and elsewhere are not aware of the extremely important roles that they play in the reform process required to improve education. It is possible that if teachers are convinced of the difference they could make to students' academic and social lives, they would embrace moves to serve as agents of change. The process would need to begin with teachers recognising who they are, the ideologies that they value and how their understandings of issues are formed.

To get the process in motion, teachers would need to become critically self-reflective and investigate how their ideologies have been fashioned (McLaren 2000). School classrooms reflect and are shaped by teachers' and students' understandings of issues such as racism, sexism and classism. Many teachers are aware of the complexities of diversity but do not address them in classrooms. They do not believe they are equipped to change students' biases and prejudices (Hollins and Guzman 2005). Further, teachers often feel incapable of enabling students to become critical and creative thinkers (Lemann 1999). Yet, classrooms provide windows of potential and promise where teachers and students can reflect, imagine, and give rise to new ideas and visions despite difficult circumstances (hooks 1994). hooks' contention that classrooms, despite their challenges, are contexts of thought, creativity and growth has informed how student teachers in this study entered the research process. Understanding how other teachers in other contexts serve as agents of change even when faced with hardships assisted student teachers in this study to make sense of their roles in students' lives and beyond.

Teachers, in various contexts, successfully serve as agents of change despite the challenges that face them. In the poverty-stricken area of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, for example, education is characterised by poor results, rote-learning, memorisation, a punitive atmosphere and examinations riddled with corruption (Ali 2011). Ali (2011) aimed at understanding how teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan pursue improvements in order to promote meaningful learning in the classroom and how they influence changes in practices and situations inside and outside the school. Using four teachers who are considered good teachers and who have a sustained commitment to their personal improvement, Ali found that teachers' roles as change agents extended to the classroom, the school and the community. Undertaking a qualitative case study with data from interviews, observations, document analysis, field notes and oral

reflections, Ali found that teachers identified as change agents move away from rote-learning, memorisation and textbook transmission, and encourage students to engage actively in interactive lessons. They also declare that the work ethic and environment in a school are largely determined by the teachers, not management or resources. Finally, Ali found that all four teachers were involved in small-scale community work that involved emancipatory activities aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty in their communities.

In rural Maharashtra, India, the Vanasthali Rural Development Centre aims at developing educational facilities for children and training women of the area to become teachers as agents of change (Contractor 2004). Teachers who are trained and qualified to teach language, arithmetic and hygiene, give the women, who have themselves dropped out of school after grade six, a six-month training course. The results of the training are that firstly, the women grow in confidence, urge parents to send their children to school, advise parents on family planning, healthcare and nutrition, and participate in issues related to local governance. Secondly, other women see the teachers as positive role models and are eager to send their children to school. Thirdly, students become enthusiastic about completing their education. Finally, women turn up in large numbers wanting to be trained by the Vanasthali Rural Development Centre to become teachers who are agents of change.

In his study with Tunisian teachers, Kennedy (1987) worked with teachers in a teacher-development and materials-design programme to implement change. The study used collaborative, consensual decisions about what to do and what to include in materials, and teachers appreciated that they had ownership of the process and product. The study used incremental steps in the process, working from the experiences teachers brought to the study and the theories to which they subscribed. Thereafter, the programme could build on what was already in place. Most importantly, it was decided that the teacher-development and materials-design programme to implement change was to be based on well thought-out principles and designs. This would serve as a blueprint for the future should others want to use it or if further changes were needed.

It is clear, from the three studies cited, that to enable students to engage effectively in academic and social contexts, the focus has to be on the teacher. Hattie (2003), too, focused on the effects of teachers on learning in his study in New Zealand classrooms. Hattie notes that while studies on learning tend to focus on students, the home, schools, principals, and peer effects, it is the teacher who has the major influence. Hattie (2003, 6) concluded that

excellent teachers have mastery over their subject matter, guide learning through classroom interactions, monitor learning and provide feedback, attend to affective attributes, and influence students' outcomes of learning. They are thus able to effect changes and make a difference to students' lives.

For teachers like this to become a reality in our schools, they must be empowered to assume agency. In an action research study carried out in New Zealand classrooms in the period 2003 – 2004, a principal, recognising that the teachers were the best yet most underutilised resource in the school, used a system of coaching to develop a group of teachers (Sutton n.d.). In undertaking this, teachers had to join the study voluntarily, share in all aspects of planning and implementation of the programme and be prepared to disseminate findings to their peers. The aim was for teachers to make changes and to influence their peers to do the same. The focus was on empowering teachers to determine what skills and techniques were required for effective teaching. They also used reflection as a tool to improve pedagogy and interrogate the role of teachers as professionals. Similarly, using an action research approach that raised teachers' critical consciousness, Lu and Ortlieb (2009) used self-reflection, inquiry and evaluation to produce changes in classrooms that moved successfully towards effective inquiry-based learning and teaching.

Fullan (1993) in his Canadian study as a teacher educator observed that teachers who are agents of change develop strategies to accomplish goals that lead to the growth of their students. Their strategies are underpinned by four requirements: personal vision building, inquiry, mastery and collaboration. While Fullan (1993, 10) stressed the importance of content and pedagogical knowledge, he noted that 'the teacher of the future must actively improve the conditions for learning in his or her immediate learning environments'. Teachers are urged not just to uplift the classroom and its students, but also to teach students how to use their skills to respond effectively to conditions surrounding the classroom.

What the studies cited above indicate is that teachers will serve as agents of change when they recognise the importance of the role, embrace it voluntarily, and take ownership of their decisions. Teachers as agents of change also reflect on and interrogate their experiences and the theories to which they subscribe (Sutton n.d.; Kennedy 1987; Lu and Ortlieb 2009). Further, they rely on themselves, not external drivers, to make a difference to their students' academic and social lives (Contractor 2004; Ali 2011). They are active, engaged teachers (Hattie 2003; Ali 2011) who serve as role-models not just to their students but also to the

community at large and they actively set out to improve conditions in the learning environment and beyond (Fullan 1993; Contractor 2004; Ali 2011). Giroux (1987, 11) notes that ‘there is a dire need to develop pedagogical practices ... that bring teachers, parents, and students together around new and more emancipatory visions of community’. Thus, the researcher and student teachers in this study had to interrogate the studies mentioned to ascertain the extent to which the ideas gleaned from the studies may be adopted or transformed for the local context.

## **2.6. Strategies used by effective, engaged teachers**

The contention of this thesis is that for teachers to serve as agents of change, they need to be effective and engaged in the classroom. What, then, would be the characteristics of an effective, engaged teacher? Cunnane (2010) cites the study by Russell and Barefoot (2010) who asked four hundred university students from the University of Hertfordshire’s Learning and Teaching Institute what they thought these characteristics would be. The researchers found that the factors considered least important were feedback and assessment. The factor mentioned as most important was the ability to teach well, followed by positivity and the ability to be entertaining. Students pointed out that being entertaining did not mean having a sense of humour or being funny. It meant that effective teachers made the educational experience engaging and enjoyable.

A similar study was conducted by researchers from the University of Western Sydney in conjunction with classroom teachers and education department officials. The focus was on engaging disadvantaged students. Teachers who were deemed effective and engaging and were considered to have a positive impact on social and academic outcomes in their schools were identified. They came from pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, and from both rural and urban contexts (Report by Corporate Priority Schools Programs for the NSW Department of Education and Communities 2011).

The characteristics of effective, engaged teachers (as identified by the project) were that, firstly, students want to be in these teachers’ classrooms and value school, they enjoy being involved in their teachers’ lessons and they actively participate in learning experiences designed by their teachers. Secondly, these teachers design lessons of high intellectual quality and recognise the importance of improving learning and teaching. Thirdly, they ensure that the classroom environment enables sharing and reflection, enable a community of students and make students feel good about themselves. Fourthly, these teachers manage the classroom

by focussing on the learning and not on controlling behaviour and fifthly, effective, engaged teachers help students achieve strong classroom results and show students how to become better students.

The study, which ran for one week and used case studies involving observations, reflections, dialogue and cross-case analysis, examined classroom pedagogy in classrooms of twenty-five teachers identified as effective and engaging. Some of the findings were that effective, engaged teachers plan lessons well, are organised, and use high quality texts. Their lessons incorporate explicit teaching, as well as whole-class, small-group, pair-work and individual tasks. Students often serve as teachers and teachers as students. The teachers encourage jointly-negotiated, active, constructivist learning where students predict, interpret and evaluate information, engage with open-ended tasks and reflect on their learning. Learning is problem-based and co-operative, and students are encouraged to take risks, ask questions and address alternative perspectives and solutions. Their lessons often integrate concepts across the curriculum and have a high literacy focus. Each lesson positions the task, foregrounds content and activates prior, background learning. Ultimately, the teachers explicitly unpack the language of the school, ensure that every lesson is a positive one, communicate their high expectations of students, and are determined that students achieve success.

The findings of the study were used to formulate a professional development module to empower teachers to become effective and engaged. The ideas from the study served as starting points for this research study and provided useful guidelines to the researcher and student teachers for unpacking how a teacher could become effective and engaged.

Another similar study by Meister (2010) yielded a different set of outcomes. In a study of ten high school teachers, Meister sought to discover what traits would identify teachers who were motivated and highly effective in their classrooms. The selected sample of teachers was chosen by school administrators and fellow teachers as being effective and engaging in their classrooms. Using interviews, Meister found that all the teachers chosen were highly experienced, did not believe that administrative support and leadership had any bearing on their effectiveness in their classrooms, and identified interaction with colleagues as having been particularly important in their development. All ten teachers were involved in extracurricular activities and emphasised the need to connect with students in and out of the classroom.

The ten teachers cited similar difficulties that confronted them, such as excessive paper-work arising from the work done by their students, high volumes of administrative tasks, mandated testing-programmes, violence in schools, and the impact on the classroom of students' socio-economic situations. Interestingly, when asked how they became effective and engaged as teachers and established a professional identity, they cited the influence, as role model, of either their own best teacher or an effective colleague. When asked how they had grown as teachers, no respondent mentioned anything to do with knowledge and skills. Instead, they identified dispositions that made them wiser, more humane teachers who taught with love, wisdom and grace, and who treated students as their own. And while none would lay claim to having made any long-term impact on their students' future, they did express the hope that they would be remembered for being effective and engaged teachers. Meister's study confirmed the need for this study to take into account the factor of teacher dispositions in seeking to assess the potential impact of teaching with love, wisdom and grace, and of treating students as their own to create effective, engaged teachers.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) argue that teachers cannot be effective and engaged if they confine themselves to the traditional teaching method of lecturing to students, where teachers talk and students listen. Instead, they urge the need for learning where students are actively involved in activities and can reflect on what they are doing. Freire (1970) identifies two kinds of education: what he calls banking education and libertarian education. Banking education is where the teacher, the depositor, deposits information into students, who are seen as empty vessels. With this kind of education, students, who are generally passive, receive, memorise and repeat information. There is no real communication between teachers and students, who are seen to have 'disengaged brains'.

With libertarian education, by contrast, teachers and students are partners involved in meaningful communication. Students are actively involved in acts of cognition and in the learning process, and the teacher is open to learning from the students. Meaningful dialogue and interaction benefit both students and teachers as they work in a co-operative relationship. In libertarian education, the teacher is attuned to the students' emerging skills and abilities. The Freirean approach to education, Cornwall (1997) points out, starts with what students know, and students are seen as active subjects who participate in the classroom, not objects to be worked on and fed information.

Fielding's (2005) research to ascertain the effect of participation in effective learning reveals that students remember a mere ten percent of what they read, twenty percent of what they hear, thirty percent of what they see, fifty percent of what they see and hear, and ninety percent of what they do and say. Fielding's findings suggest that for lessons to be effective, teachers need to employ active learning strategies where students do and say. Such activities include interactive, participatory, collaborative learning strategies such as class discussions, demonstrations, short writing exercises, writing groups, problem-centred instruction, research groups, reading and responding to each other's work, collaborative meaning-making of concepts, case studies, debates, drama strategies, and peer teaching, among others (McKeachie et al. 1986; Bonwell and Eison 1991; Smith and McGregor 1992). Many researchers point to a simple effective innovation of pausing three times in a traditional teacher-centred lesson for two minutes at a time to allow students to consolidate notes, clarify understandings or engage in a short writing task (Penner 1984; Ruhl, Hughes and Schloss 1987). Many of the interactive, participatory, collaborative learning strategies mentioned above were actively incorporated into this study, reflected on by participants, and assessed to determine their effectiveness to engage students.

If teachers choose to use the activities just mentioned, they will need to see themselves less as expert transmitters of knowledge and more as expert designers of intellectual experiences for students to discover knowledge (Smith and MacGregor 1992). To discover knowledge, students need to work actively in purposeful ways, integrating new information with prior knowledge. Working as a class, in groups or pairs, students bring multiple perspectives and diverse backgrounds, learning styles, experiences and aspirations to the classroom. These activities allow teachers to ascertain how students are learning. However, Smith and MacGregor (1992) warn against a one-size-fits-all approach but stress the need to choose strategies suitable for the students in the classroom. In collaborative classrooms that use active learning, the face-to-face, lecturing/ listening/ note-taking process does not disappear entirely, but is used in conjunction with other processes based in students' discussion and active work with the texts being considered. The collaborative strategies mentioned demand that students talk to each other to achieve an end or to produce a product. Golub (1988) points out that it is in the talking that much of the learning occurs. During the talking, students are directly involved in the learning process, co-operation and teamwork become paramount, and there is a responsibility for results.

Bordan (1970) notes that active learning strategies often cause anxieties for teachers and she identifies ways to alleviate their fears. Teachers are urged to establish a relaxed classroom of trust and rapport as a prelude to co-operative activity. Co-operative learning can only occur in a supportive intellectual and emotional environment where students are encouraged to take risks (Lowman 1984). When using such strategies in the classroom, it is essential that the teacher respects students by interacting with them and listening to them, and by ensuring that students are never humiliated in their efforts (Kudlick 1999). Kudlick urges teachers to accept when a strategy is not working and move on. To this end, it is important that a teacher learns to relax and even laugh in the classroom.

The strategies mentioned in this section are guidelines for effective and engaged classroom teaching, which is the first step in seeking to develop one's students academically and socially.

## **2.7. Strategies used by teachers to help students develop academically and socially**

Providing students with subject matter might increase their knowledge, and teaching in an effective, engaged manner will, in itself, probably take students closer to a clear understanding of the subject matter. However, the teacher will move closer to being an agent of change if the lesson is located within the realities and histories of the students themselves.

Bartolome (1994, 173) advises against looking for the 'right' teaching strategy. Instead, the teacher should look for a 'humanising pedagogy that respects and uses the reality, history and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice'. Bartolome (2009) emphasises the importance of well-selected teaching strategies, but warns that merely reproducing such strategies without understanding who the students are and what they bring with them will not necessarily achieve successful student learning. Various researchers (Edelsky, Altwerger and Flores 1991; Perez and Torres-Guzman 1992; Bartolome 2009) have successfully used a humanising pedagogy where students' languages and life experiences are incorporated while the teacher provides academic content knowledge and skills (Bartolome 2009). In the South African context, it is the 'right' strategy for teachers to identify students' realities, histories and perspectives and utilise them in their teaching practices. Apartheid South Africa nullified realities, histories and perspectives for the majority of students, rendering them invisible, but the post-apartheid teacher has the opportunity to tap into students' rich resources and build on them.

To achieve a ‘humanising pedagogy’, Ladson-Billings (1995, 160) recommends culturally-relevant teaching that is committed to collective, communal empowerment. Culturally-relevant teaching, which this study uses as a basis for engagement, is based on three principles (Ladson-Billings 1995, 2009). The first principle is that students must realise academic competence and success and should learn what is most valuable to them. Culturally relevant teaching occurs when students are excited and engaged, when their knowledges are acknowledged and built on, and when they understand that learning may be challenging and require hard work. In Ladson-Billings’ study (1995, 160), teachers ‘demanded, reinforced and produced academic excellence in their students’. The second principle asserts that for culturally-relevant teaching, students must develop and maintain cultural competence, which is defined as ‘the ability to function effectively in one’s culture of origin’. This is achieved by using students’ cultures as building blocks for learning and teaching. While teachers should affirm students’ home languages, use home languages as a way into learning English and use material that reflects the cultures in the classroom, teachers must also actively confront negative representations of cultural groups. The final principle is that students must develop a critical consciousness or socio-political critique where they confront the *status quo* of the existing social order by critiquing social structures, practices, norms, ethics and institutions that produce, reproduce and maintain the social order. Teachers should thus challenge students to ask questions that interrogate who is included or excluded from social benefits.

Villegas (1991) speaks similarly of a culturally-responsive pedagogy where teachers use strategies that acknowledge and develop culturally different ways of behaving, learning and using language in the classroom. Lipman (2009) takes this idea further when she identifies a culturally-relevant, responsive, emancipatory pedagogy that has a liberatory aim. This pedagogy understands that education is political and that teaching cannot be ‘colourblind’ (Lipman 2009, 364). Instead, teachers need to connect with and draw on the discourses, cultures and socio-political realities of their students to promote academic competence and socio-political awareness. In this way, teachers will enable students to develop. Lipman identifies four main strategies to achieve academic and social development. Firstly, teachers should link literacy practices with students’ social identities. Secondly, students should be empowered to develop skills that will enable them to resist all forms of oppression. Thirdly, teachers need to be aware of and engage with the community-issues facing students in the classroom. Finally, students need to be empowered to recognise themselves as potential

intellectual leaders. Only then, Lipman contends, will teachers be successful in their classrooms.

A three-year study by Ladson-Billings (2009) focussed on successful teachers of African-American students. Parents and school principals were asked to identify successful teachers. Parents chose teachers in whose classrooms students were enthusiastic about learning. In these classrooms, students had respect for their teachers, and teachers were seen as understanding students' worlds. Principals chose teachers because of their low discipline referral rates, students' high attendance rates, and students' test scores. Teachers who appeared on both lists were asked to participate in the study.

The study, using interviews, unannounced classroom visits, videotaped lessons and group discussions, found no themes, patterns or similarities in teachers' practices and strategies. Interviews revealed that teachers did not believe that teaching strategies were the most important factor in their classrooms. Instead, all pointed to the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of their practices, how they structured social relations in and out of the classroom, and how they conceived of knowledge. All teachers in the study manifested a strong identity with their profession, did not see teaching as a task, indicated that they chose to teach and were not embarrassed or ashamed to be teachers. Further, they chose to teach in low-income districts, identified themselves with the community, saw teaching as a way to give back to the community, and encouraged their students to give back to the community as well. Teachers attended functions and used the services in the community.

Other data revealed that teachers created a community of students that avoided competition where students taught one another and were responsible for each other's learning, collaborative learning was encouraged, and teachers scaffolded learning for students. Teachers encouraged students to act as teachers and teachers sat in as students. Struggling students were given individual attention and encouragement because, ultimately, teachers believed that it was their responsibility that all students should succeed academically and socially.

While Bartolome and Ladson-Billings persuaded teachers to use a humanising pedagogy, hooks (1994) argues for an engaged pedagogy that requires teachers to become aware of themselves, not just as practitioners, but also as human beings. hooks urges all teachers to teach in a non-threatening, anti-discriminatory way thereby making self-actualisation the goal for both teachers and students. hooks asks that teachers acknowledge their authority and its

limitations, and then work out how they and the students can learn together, so that no one gains the kind of power to use the classroom as a space of domination. hooks believes that when hierarchy is diffused, a sense of community can prevail in classrooms and inequalities can be rectified.

In short, whether the pedagogies are humanising, culturally-responsive, culturally-relevant, responsive, emancipatory, or engaged, they recognise the need to respect and use the realities, histories and perspectives of the students. Where these pedagogies diverge is in their different foci. While a humanising pedagogy focuses on challenging students, enabling their success, engaging them and encouraging them to confront oppressive practices, a culturally responsive pedagogy uses strategies that acknowledge and develop culturally different ways of behaving, learning and using language. A culturally-relevant, responsive, emancipatory pedagogy takes the development aspect further by linking literacy practices with students' social identities, actively developing skills to resist oppressive practices, engaging in community issues and empowering students to become leaders. An engaged pedagogy shifts the focus to the teacher (who should teach in a non-threatening, anti-discriminatory way) and the teaching space (which should reflect a sense of community). All these pedagogies were unpacked by the student teachers in this study.

Besides the various pedagogies, Anstey and Bull (2006) urge teachers to encourage students to ask questions, and to show them how to become self-aware. Anstey and Bull ask that students and teachers ask questions about who is participating, what perspectives students and teachers have, how their involvement affects the students' positions, and what students need to do. Above all, students must gain necessary skills to become discriminating in their choices, examine texts with authenticity, integrity and authority, take a critical perspective, and ultimately take control of their social futures. Boler (2004) takes the teachers' responsibility further by asking that teachers create classrooms that provide a public space for marginalised and silenced voices to participate safely and with respect, a place where such voices can respond to, and challenge, practices rooted in privilege, supremacy and dominance.

To create better schools for marginalised students from the favela communities in poor Brazilian neighbourhoods, Gandin and Apple (2003) set up the Citizens Schools Project in conjunction with the Workers Party Municipal Government in Porto Alegre. The project followed three different lines of development. Firstly, the schools responded to historical exclusion, failure and learner drop-out by reorganising the structure of schooling and

challenging the concept of failure. All students were assigned to classes with students their age, and while some students needed to fill their knowledge gaps, others were challenged to extend their knowledge. The second part of the project focussed on the curriculum where students worked on interdisciplinary themes based on issues that faced the favela communities. The curriculum highlighted the socio-political realities of the communities, especially racism which is a widespread form of oppression in Brazil. Finally, the schools were set up to be administered using democratic participation and collective responsibility. Councils comprising teachers, parents, students and a school administrator decided on the aims of the schools, allocated resources and determined the policies, structure, governance and curriculum of the schools.

To become agents of change, teachers thus need to be familiar with the challenges in and needs of their environments. They also need to ascertain what will make them effective and engaged in their classrooms and they need to embrace the strategies that will help students develop academically and socially. The strength of their strategies hinges on their acceptance of a humanising pedagogy that values students' background knowledge and life experiences, and where students are treated with respect and dignity (Bartolome 2009). In addition, Freire (2009) notes that effective teachers need a solid command of their academic disciplines and an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum. They need to teach the contents of the academic discipline while simultaneously serving as agents of change by creating opportunities for students to engage with the content critically and thus making a difference in their classrooms.

## **2.8. Using literature to make a difference in the classroom**

This thesis focusses on the transformation of student teachers of literature who strive to serve as agents of change and who use literary texts as catalysts to make a difference to their students' lives. It is therefore essential to understand the DoE requirements for teachers of literature. In both primary and secondary schools in South Africa, teachers of English are responsible for teaching English language and literature. When teaching literature, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DoE 2011) for Grades R - 12 in both the Home Language and First Additional Language are based on principles of social transformation, redressing educational imbalances of the past, and provision of equal opportunity. It encourages active, critical approaches to teaching and learning. Human rights, inclusivity and social justice, as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, underpin the document, which draws attention to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender,

language, age, and disability. Indigenous knowledge systems are acknowledged and valued as important providers to enhancing the values in the Constitution.

CAPS aims to produce students who can identify and solve problems, use critical and creative thinking, work individually and in a team, organise and manage themselves responsibly and effectively, analyse and evaluate information critically, communicate effectively, and recognise the inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness of systems and contexts. The CAPS document requires that students in the English classroom should learn listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presentational skills that will allow them to appreciate, enjoy and interact critically and confidently with a wide range of texts, and thus engage effectively with them. Critical engagement should allow students to recognise and challenge perspectives, values and power relations in texts. This should lead to confidence in expressing and justifying ideas and opinions to become independent, analytical thinkers. Opinions on ethical issues and values should be encouraged as students engage with texts about human rights and responsibilities such as the rights of children, women, the disabled, and the aged, and issues linked to race, culture, ideology, class, belief systems, gender, HIV and AIDS, freedom of expression, censorship and the environment. The CAPS document advocates change and teachers, therefore, need to be able to understand the tenets of the document, embrace the need to move away from prescriptive models and pedagogies, and recognise their roles as agents of change. Student teachers in the study engaged with the curriculum documents to understand the expectations of teachers in the literature classroom.

To engage fully with the requirements of the CAPS document, teachers in the literature classroom have to realise that the texts they choose are important (Bender-Slack 2007). Texts represent identities, systems of knowledge and beliefs, and social relations between subjects through their depictions of the world and its people (Fairclough 1995). Literature classrooms tend however to focus on a form of unspoken, implied, tacit curriculum in conservative, traditional approaches to literary comprehension and understanding which thwart any scrutiny of ideological assumptions within texts (Eagleton 1996).

Students perceive the value of literature according to the way teachers engage with texts in classrooms. In a study examining the differences between a transmission model of teaching and a participatory model, the function of the text emerged as important (Alvermann 2002). In transmission model classrooms, the text is recognised as a knowledge-dispenser while in

participatory model classrooms, the text is seen as a means for discovering and building new knowledge.

Langer's (2001) five-year study of twenty-five literature classrooms sought to determine how teaching and learning occurred. Langer found that in high-performing schools, texts are deconstructed and discussed, and students make connections across texts and media forms. Learning is usually collaborative and students' thinking is constantly challenged. The exploration of literature is accompanied by activities such as writing poetry and songs, visits to places mentioned in the texts, and letter-writing from various perspectives. Underpinning the study of the text is a consideration of the historical, political and ethical dimensions that are inscribed in it. Most importantly, teachers operate from positions of strong philosophical principles that inform their teaching. In contrast, less successful schools place the teacher at the centre of the instruction. Teachers direct students into specific readings of the text and point out what the connections are between the text and students' personal lives. These teachers also point out the connections of the text with other texts rather than encouraging students to discover the connections themselves. Langer's findings confirm those of both Agee (2000) and Gaughan (2001). Agee (2000) found that in many classrooms teachers consider the teaching of the literary canon to be the most important aspect in the literature classroom and these teachers serve as the centre of instruction and interpretation. Similarly, Gaughan (2001) found that in many classrooms, the teacher of English literature exposes students to the canon of literature, teaches them how to write academic essays and exposes them to various literary eras. The teacher fails to engage with issues in ways that might prepare students for life.

To prepare students for life, texts may be considered for their gendered and other language forms and teachers could use texts to examine the values and societal forces allied with the English literature classroom (Orellana 1995). In a 2005 study, Kuo found that by focussing on gender issues in texts, students are provided with opportunities to think critically and understand how issues of gender play out in their lives. Similarly, Comber (2005) studied two teachers who wanted to use texts for change. The study found that by changing the questions they asked about texts, teachers could address the way texts were constructed and how gender was represented within texts. Reilly (2010), too, focussed on gender representations in literary texts. Working with literary texts in an all boys' school, Reilly found that critical reflection about representations of gender in literature and society can be limited if the learning environment does not promote gender, racial, cultural and class equality. Thus, unlike the

studies by Kuo and Comber where contexts played no significant part, Reilly found that the learning environment does shape the perceptions and attitudes of students towards gender. Thus, while the texts teachers choose determine the extent to which they may engage with and interrogate issues, the way teachers choose to teach and the contexts in which they teach also determine the value of a text.

Many researchers, such as Henning (1993) and Savvidou (2004), have recognised the value of literature in preparing students for life through the unique opportunity it affords for grappling with the contradictions, tensions and struggles faced by communities and societies. Henning (1993) recognised that through the effective teaching of literature, students are able to cultivate cognitive and linguistic skills, cultural-awareness and sensitivity. Savvidou (2004) noted that by studying literature, students can broaden their understanding both of their own worlds and of those not immediately their own. Literature has the potential to create opportunities for personal responses to issues, characters and events that present themselves in texts.

By studying literature, teachers are also able to reinforce grammatical and lexical structures (Savvidou 2004) while still enabling enjoyment, understanding and critical responses to the texts as required by the national curriculum. While literature provides authentic material for language learning and language enrichment, it also allows for the personal interpretation of and experimentation with the language (Lazar 2005). Many researchers have identified the value of using literature to teach language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking and to explore language areas such as vocabulary, grammar and register. Since literature provides a rich source of material over a range of registers, learners are able to learn both the figurative and daily use of the target language in the different genres of literary texts. While teachers use literature to enable students' oral discussion about their opinions and feelings about a text, the engagement with the text also develops students' language awareness and interpretative abilities. A developed awareness of language and an ability to interpret texts could empower students to enjoy a deeper engagement with literary texts (Brumfit and Carter 1986; Lazar 1990; Lazar 1993; Ur 1996; Aebersold and Field 1997; Collie and Slater 1997; McKay 2001; Hismanoglu 2005; Kucukoglu and Arikan 2011).

Mabunda (2008), in his study of South African student teachers' responses to a text, found that engagement with literature has the ability to provide student teachers with an understanding of social realities. Hatton and van der Walt (2011) take the idea further by

encouraging the use of South African texts to help students become socially aware of South African realities, learn about South Africa's past and develop an understanding of various cultures within South Africa, supporting Bernhardt's (1995) view that literature is the key to cultural competence and cultural understanding. Similarly, Chehlova's (2004) study in citizen education in Latvia found that literature allows students to understand universal human cultural values and provides starting points for developing cultural dialogues, understanding other cultures and developing cultural identities. Sumara (1998), too, found that as students identify with and interpret the experiences of characters in texts, they learn to re-identify and re-interpret themselves. Reading literature then becomes a site for thinking about their evolving identities.

Schachter and Galili-Schachter (2012, 1) engage with the idea of identity differently by encouraging the development of identity literacy through literary texts. Identity literacy is defined as readers' competence and disposition to engage the meaning systems found in texts and to consider using them as part of their own personal meaning system, that 'system within which they define themselves and the world'. In their study, the researchers found that effective textual study, taught by engaging teachers, heightens the possibility of texts to initiate students' reflections on their identities.

However, while acknowledging that literature may be valuable in reflecting who people are, including their achievements, shortcomings, dilemmas and evolution, McInnis (1999) urges teachers to teach literature from diverse times and places to enable a broader view of humanity. As Krog (2012) notes, literature captures reality in a way that theoretical discussions of the same issues cannot accomplish and points out that literature enables understanding of issues not accessible by other means.

In addition, a study of literature has the potential to open students' minds to social dilemmas, equip them with a readiness to tackle problems still unimaginable, and expose them to many worlds (Bruner 1986). Galda and Beach (2001) note that by creating opportunities for students to read and respond to texts in the company of others, teachers nurture their students' ability to make sense of the text-worlds and the lived worlds. In addition, through the study of literary texts, teachers make it possible for students to use their own responses to texts to construct and critique the two worlds. Similarly, Reilly (2010) found that it is necessary to provide space for students to express their views whilst encouraging them to consider other points of view and enable students to become critically reflective about literary and real

worlds. Thus, literature has the ability to assist students to understand their worlds and learn from the experiences in the texts.

Further, the study of literature can empower students with skills that could enable agency. Takolander (2009) showed that the study of literature, including the language of literature, provides opportunities for individual and social learning, reflection, problem-solving, empowerment and social responsibility. In school classrooms, literature could enable discussion of issues relevant to students such as family conflicts, substance abuse, divorce, racism, pregnancy, and political injustice, and thus help students cope with these issues in their lives (Kailin 1994; Bean and Rigoni 2001).

While the study of literature exposes learners to complex themes, nurtures empathy and tolerance for diversity (Ghosn 2002), Nance (2006) asks that teachers engage with literary texts to enable agency. Nance notes that when teachers want to use texts to make a difference to their learners' lives, they focus on students identifying and empathising with issues and characters. While empathy is an immediate emotional reaction where the student steps into the shoes of another and identifies similarities in their experiences, Nance notes that empathy encourages students to serve as bystander-witnesses who recognise an injustice in the text but provides no opportunities for students to act to prevent it happening again. Such situations lead to catharsis and closure for the students. In contrast to engagement with empathy, Nance suggests constructed empathy where students imagine themselves in challenging and painful situations presented in the text. However, the teacher is asked to show students that the situations in the text are very different to their own and possibly much more difficult than they are ever likely to experience. The teacher then draws students' attention to the gaps between their own experiences and those of the character. The experiences, notes Nance, avoid over-identification, leave students uneasy and return them to their own contexts from which action is possible. Students become obligated witnesses and feel compelled to act. The transformation in the students' thinking empowers them with agency and voice.

Ultimately, teachers need to use literature to give students a voice (Bean and Moni 2003). hooks (1989) reminds teachers that they must provide time and space for analysis that allows all students to have a voice. Teachers cannot claim to allow free speech in a classroom while, at the same time, censoring and silencing views. Student teachers in this study thus realised that while the study of literature has the potential to empower students with many skills, this can only be attained if teachers recognise the power of literature and if their classrooms are

supportive of social and academic change. Classroom discussions of literature are embedded in the schooling environment and shape students' understanding of literature (Marshall, Smagorinsky and Smith 1995). Teachers have to recognise that classrooms are not impartial and unbiased. Rather, they are complicated with marked social and cultural identities and settings (Giroux 1992), positioned within, and ordered by a particular discursive field that comprises competing modes of understanding the world and its social structures and processes (Weedon 1997). Thus, if teachers want students to question and unpack the worlds presented in literary texts, reveal the ideological and hegemonic discourses in texts, and teach in the interests of social justice, an effective way in is the use of a critical literacy approach (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009), an approach unpacked in great detail with student teachers in this study.

Anderson and Irvine (1993, 82) define critical literacy as 'learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations'. Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) note that critical literacy, a major part of critical pedagogy, uses dialogue and conscientisation to develop students' critical discourses. Shor (2009) notes that critical literacy empowers students to question, discover alternatives to situations and challenge the *status quo* presented in literary texts. Issues of social justice, democracy, and self and social construction are highlighted in literary texts.

In her self-study, Pierce (2006) shifted from an impartial skills-based approach to a critical approach by consciously teaching for fairness, integrity, equity and social justice. Morgan (1998, 157) notes that 'critical literacy teaching begins by problematising the culture and knowledges in the text – putting them up for grabs' [and encouraging] 'critical debate for weighing, judging, and critiquing'. A critical position in the literature classroom thus empowers students to consider 'what choices have been made in the creation of the text' (Janks and Ivanic 1992, 316). Bruner (1986, 121, 128, 129) points out that teachers need to recognise that the language in literary texts 'can never be neutral. Language necessarily imposes a perspective in which things are viewed and a stance toward what we view'.

Mellor and Patterson (2000, 508) wanted to help students read texts with 'greater critical consciousness of their own responses'. They focussed their research around asking students the following questions: What are the possible multiple readings of a text? From where could such readings come? How might such readings be constructed? What values might such

readings support, affirm or oppose? Their study revealed that teachers need to make explicit the plurality of texts' meanings and make visible the gaps available for analysis.

In their 2003 study, Bean and Moni also used critical literacy to approach a novel. They considered cultural and ideological power-relations in character-identity in the text, focussed on subject and reader-positioning, helped unpack the gaps and silences inherent in the novel, and incorporated opportunities for classroom transformation. In their teaching, they considered different perspectives of issues, compared students' and characters' choices, utilised various drama strategies to foster empathy, and unpacked with students how the author constructed the text and how language operated in the text. They found that students understood that a text has many meanings and that the text represents a version of the world. This version may be accepted, rejected and/or questioned. Students recognise that a text uses language to manipulate while its very construction allows it to be transparent. This transparency enables students to grasp that the worldview in texts is not a natural one and all views may be accepted, challenged and/or resisted. Using various strategies that are supported by a critical literacy underpinning enabled Bean and Moni to use literature to recognise the power of language in texts, make a difference in the classroom and bring about change in students' lives.

Similarly, in their study to determine the efficacy of critical thinking through literature, Tung and Chang (2009) found that literature study helped to improve overall scores in critical thinking skills, particularly in analysis. The researchers found that students perceived class discussions, rather than any other teaching strategy, to be most effective in enabling critical thinking skills.

Many other strategies used to bring about change in the literature classroom and beyond have been examined in various studies. These include teaching students about multiple perspectives in texts (Ciardiello 2004); showing students how authors characterise people and ideas, and how authors endorse or stifle views (Johnson and Freedman 2005); demonstrating to students how to recognise prejudice, bias, discrimination and racism (Allen 1997); constructing a reading of a text that may actively resist and challenge the preferred reading of the text (Bean and Moni 2003); and directing students away from personal responses to a text and towards identifying the significance of cultural and social forces in a text (Willinsky 1991; Monkman, MacGillivaray and Leyva 2003).

The studies reveal that if teachers in literature classes are to be effective and engaged and make a difference to their students' academic and social lives, they need to allow students to confront issues, question assumptions, and interrogate how the text is located in its context and literacy practices. In order for teachers of literature to become effective, engaged and empowered to enable students' academic and social development, then student teachers of literature have to be allowed to connect closely with such issues so that they may become agents of change.

## **2.9. Preparing student teachers to become agents of change**

If we are to educate teacher candidates to believe that all children can learn, and to teach fairly and equitably, should we also encourage our schools of education to present these varied political positions? And if so, how will doing so affect how we frame and assess our candidates' ability to teach fairly and equitably? Will opening the dialogue move us closer to our profession's shared goal to educate teachers and most importantly all children and youth? (Borko, Liston and Whitcomb 2007, 363).

The questions posed here by Borko, Liston and Whitcomb (2007) reflect the dilemmas facing teacher education programmes and teacher educators. If teacher education programmes and teacher educators fail to engage with such issues, then student teachers, and therefore teachers too, might merely replicate their conceptions of teachers and teaching gleaned from their own experiences as students. In her study with two novice teachers who reflected on their teacher education programme, McPherson (2000) found that novice teachers maintain long-held opinions about what it means to be a teacher. The novice teachers cannot move beyond their pre-existing beliefs and thus cannot make the connections between the theory presented at the university and their experiences in their classrooms. In other words, teacher education programmes fail to change student teachers' prior understandings of teaching and being a teacher.

When student teachers enter a teacher education programme, they bring with them their own history and biography (Gore and Zeichner 1991), the socio-cultural impact and pedagogies of their former schools (Anstey and Bull 2006) and, often, an unpoliticised view of schooling (Gore and Zeichner 1991). They come in very strongly influenced by a twelve-year apprenticeship of observation that they have imbibed from their time at school as students (Lortie 1975). They understand the concept of learning to teach as being able to imitate their colleagues and past teachers (McPherson 2000), and they suppress their beliefs in teaching and succumb to pressure to conform to existing models of teaching (Peim 2003). Their

school's organisation and culture have a far more profound impact on their teaching than their formal teacher education programme (Lortie 1975). The social, economic and political forces around them as well as the media and various socialisation processes mediate the influence of teacher education on the student teachers' views (Tatto 1998). For student teachers to buy into change agency, teacher education programmes have to pay attention to and address student teachers' previous beliefs about, attitudes to and experiences in school (Florio-Ruane and Lensmire 1990).

The idea of being a change agent is challenging for student teachers who struggle to see themselves as teachers, much less as agents of change (Price and Valli 2005). Goodlad's (1990) survey of American student teachers and their lecturers found that only five percent of respondents consider teachers as potential agents of change (cited in Cochran-Smith 1991). Donnison's (2007) study with student teachers entering a teacher education programme in Australia found that student teachers cannot formulate and express their ideas about change but they do believe that they will be agents of change in their classrooms. However, the study revealed that while student teachers articulate such beliefs, they blame others for societal and educational problems, do not want to assume responsibility for change, remain socially disengaged, and maintain traditional, conservative models of schooling. They are 'supportive of the tenacious discourses of schooling that are about continuity, conservation, and conservatism' (Donnison 2007, 10). Francis and le Roux (2011) found likewise that although all student teachers in their study perceived themselves as agents of change, they nonetheless maintained that it was the schools that ultimately bore responsibility for social change, not the teachers. Student teachers in the Francis and le Roux study believed that subjects such as Life Orientation should deal with social-change issues. These findings indicate that student teachers have complex and conflicting perceptions of their roles as agents of change. Before student teachers can be prepared as future agents of change, the dynamics surrounding teachers' roles need first to be unpacked. In this study, it was important to ascertain student teachers' perceptions about their roles as teachers before working with student teachers as they moved towards becoming agents of change.

Cochran-Smith (1991, 285) asserts that 'the role of the teacher as an agent for change is not emphasised, and students are not deliberately socialised into assuming responsibility for school reform and renewal'. A teacher education programme should assist student teachers grow in competence and empowerment at the same time as they are also learning to teach (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken 2003), but this is often not the case. Cochran-Smith adds

that ‘student teachers are encouraged to talk about “relevant” (Cochran-Smith’s punctuation) and technical rather than critical or epistemological aspects of teaching’.

Ladson-Billings (1994) found that most teachers regarded their teacher education programmes as having done little or nothing to prepare them for present-day diverse classrooms. In addition, teacher education programmes often fail to consider the contexts in which teaching takes place, and the ethical and political issues that influence teachers and teaching (Zeichner 1983; Qi 2007). While teacher education programmes usually focus on some aspects of multicultural education, issues of racism, sexism and classism, among others, are rarely dealt with in depth (Ladson-Billings 2009). In the study by Francis and le Roux (2011), student teachers reported that their education surrounding social justice issues had been theoretical and that they had found it difficult to grasp the practical implications of the discussions. Ladson-Billings (2009) notes that with the focus on the practical aspects of learning to teach, student teachers entering teaching practice are unable to reconcile their initial expectations with complex, diverse teaching situations that they subsequently encounter. Even when programmes highlight the power of education to bring about change, they do not challenge structural inequities in the system (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken 2003) and fail to realise that schools, in the main, ‘preserve social inequities’ (Feiman-Nemser 1990, 6). Wise (2006, 5) takes the argument further when he notes that ‘the time has come for teacher educators to pay attention not merely to knowledge and skills-development and teaching and learning but also to the moral and ethical development of teachers’.

The traditional teacher education programme uses a training-model where techniques and methods of teaching are emphasised (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken 2003). In such programmes, ‘a great deal of inconsistency exists between the role of teacher as professional decision maker ... and the dominant role of teacher as technician, one our society and its institutions seek to maintain’ (Zeichner and Liston 1987, 304). Ultimately, teacher education programmes are designed as a ‘cluster of ideas about the goals of teacher preparation and the means for achieving them’ (Feiman-Nemser 1990, 1). If teacher education programmes focus solely on technical aspects of teaching and on knowledge and skills-development without preparing student teachers to make a difference to their students and their schools, then teachers ‘will turn into unhappy, overworked technicians’ (McPherson 2000, 6). While student teachers may change their technical practices, unless well-thought-out interventions are implemented, they will not necessarily change their underlying beliefs about education (Prawat 1992).

Ladson-Billings (2009) notes that teacher education programmes need to recognise that the forces of society shape teachers, and the programmes thus need to address stereotypes and biased attitudes, among others. Together with interventions, teacher educators' own pedagogical practices and beliefs play important roles in determining whether student teachers become change agents (Price and Valli 2005). For this reason, the researcher in this study (who is also the teacher educator) has to interrogate her own motivations and values, and needs to reflect on her decisions and actions.

There are, however, teacher education programmes, using a critical orientation, that encourage students to teach 'against the grain' (Cochran-Smith 1991, 285; Carroll 2007; Gopinathan 2008; Miller et. al. 2011). Such programmes enable students to focus not just on 'the mechanics of their occupation ... but to develop in them intellectual habits of reflection on their calling ... that are the mark of a professional continually engaged in self-improvement' (Goodlad cited in Yost, 1997, 38). In such programmes, students are encouraged to examine how 'everyday actions challenge or support various oppressions and injustices related to social class, race, gender, sexual preference and religion' (Zeichner 1993, 14). In these programmes, 'the emphasis on race and racism is not a goal in itself but, rather, a means for helping students develop pedagogical options that disrupt racist classroom practices and structural inequalities' (Ladson-Billings 1999, 237). In their study into the professional development and identity of Australian student teachers taking English as a major, Doecke and McKnight (2002) found that student teachers are influenced by their teacher educators' interventions, capable of formulating critical perspectives, and often display agency in their decisions. The study found, moreover, that if teacher educators draw student teachers' attention to social justice issues, student teachers are able to consider the emotional welfare and identity of their students when dealing with issues of gender and race in a literary text, and aim for democratic participation in their classrooms. It was thus imperative that student teachers in this study were able to interrogate texts, analyses, and their own and other's practices.

In her study, Cochran-Smith (1991) placed student teachers in schools with teachers who believed in the role of teachers as agents of change. The study found that while such teachers found it extremely difficult trying to teach against the grain, student teachers learnt much about teaching for change from these teachers. Student teachers found that the teachers created collaborative contexts where efforts at change were supported and student teachers were urged to ask questions and challenge assumptions. The University of California, Los

Angeles (UCLA) Graduate School of Education and Information Studies teacher education programme built on Cochran-Smith's study and sought to develop critical, transformative teachers who were able to confront their circumstances and surroundings and empowered to change them (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken 2003). The programme worked with student teachers, first-year teachers and principals, and data was gathered using dialogue-journals, meetings, seminars, lesson-analyses, reflections, interviews and videotaped lessons. Lecturers showed student teachers how to examine and confront their own beliefs, the beliefs of the teachers and those underpinning the schools. They were encouraged to become agents of social change, to use socio-cultural teaching methods, and to view cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset in teaching and learning. They were also urged to work closely with the teachers regarding any concerns that emerged during their time at schools. During the study, the first-year teachers returned for university seminars and classes, and finally presented a Master's Portfolio. Like the students teachers, teachers were encouraged to question, reflect on practice, and link theory to practice. Both groups were asked to consider whether their actions reflected a socially just philosophy and how political and economic forces worked to maintain the *status quo* in the school.

The initial findings of the study revealed a shortage of model guiding-teachers. Teachers' views often conflicted with and contradicted those of the university, and teachers did not see themselves as agents of change. Teachers saw the process as one-way with themselves as the experts, and student teachers were not encouraged to think critically and independently. By the end of the study, findings revealed that when student teachers were taught about change agency and asked to implement ideas in school classrooms, teachers with opposing beliefs did not affect them. In fact, student teachers aimed for change, challenged the practices of the schools and remained committed to being agents of change in their classrooms. More importantly, by the end of the study, student teachers had a strong impact on the practices of their guiding teachers who began to use group-work with students, saw their students' lives and communities as resources, and involved themselves in social justice projects that demonstrated the development of teacher agency.

Also working with American student teachers, Kaufman and McDonald (1992) devised a course that would make student teachers aware of their potential to become agents of change. Using seminar discussions and readings, they embarked on an explicit exploration of the concept 'teacher as agent of change'. Issues covered included professionalism, teachers' lives, empowerment, teaching as a political process, critical pedagogy and teacher as researcher.

Student teachers then continued their teacher education programme at schools. Kaufman and McDonald (1992) identified four stages in their programme. The first stage was naive idealism where student teachers were excited about change and making a difference to students' lives. In the second stage, student teachers began to confront the realities and complexities of teaching at which point they focussed almost exclusively on content and pedagogy. They indicated fear about teaching, student-discipline, organisation, and time-management. The third stage saw student teachers feeling overwhelmed and negative about their roles. They considered it easier to resign themselves to the socialisation of schools, began to feel that their hopes of change were impossible to achieve, and struggled with learning how to teach. The final stage involved re-focussing their attention on their roles as change agents, and students once more began to construct themselves as teachers with visions for change.

Data (collected from interviews, journals, instructors' notes and written work) revealed that student teachers identified the course as crucial to their recognition that they could be agents of change. The authors suggest therefore that teacher education programmes should explicitly incorporate a philosophy that presents teacher education as part of the struggle for educational change.

Working with four student teachers in an action research study, Price and Valli (2005) sought to understand what student teachers learnt about teaching, inquiry and change. They also wanted to examine student teachers' experiences of change. Data from class meetings, surveys, journals, email correspondence, interviews, videotapes, policy documents and research meetings revealed, firstly, that students have varied understandings of change. Price and Valli advise future researchers investigating academic and social change among student teachers to be aware of the student teachers' personal, professional and political purposes in relation to change, along with the individual, institutional and social contexts in which change operates. The various purposes and contexts complicate teaching and learning about change, but they also offer opportunities for change.

Secondly, the study found that research on change must be heedful of factors that can enable or impede change such as personal-biographical, interpersonal and institutional factors. Researchers need therefore to help student teachers appraise, analyse and re-frame assumptions about themselves as teachers and as change agents. Finally, the study concluded that a variety of tensions is present in action research studies dealing with change. These

tensions include tensions between individuals and institutions, action and understanding, passion and reason, and regulation and emancipation, among others. All of these tensions must be acknowledged and examined to understand the complexities involved in teaching, action research, and change.

To initiate engagement with the issue of change and change agency in research, Richardson (2004) suggests that anyone advocating that student teachers become change agents should keep the following questions in their mind: What should student teachers change from? What should student teachers change to? The most important way to prepare student teachers is to make them critical thinkers (Reinstein and Lander 2008). Critical thinking is defined as purposeful, creative, goal-driven thinking that involves rethinking and going beyond the obvious. It is marked by understanding that leads to an evaluation and a judgement. When student teachers in lecture-rooms attempt to become critical thinkers in their school classrooms and thus empower their students with the same skills, they need to focus on problem-definition, problem-solving, responding rationally to questions that do not have single answers and exploring situations completely before reaching a conclusion. Techniques that could teach critical thinking include oral and written simulations, problem-solving tasks, modelling, role-playing, co-operative learning, interrogation of research papers, debates and written assignments (Walker 2003; Reinstein and Lander 2008). Student teachers have to be taught to be inquisitive, ask questions, and not believe and accept everything they are told (Walker 2003).

Drawing on the critical thinking programme at Longview Community College, Reinstein and Lander (2008) suggest that student teachers engage with the following questions: What is success in the discipline [in this case, English literature]? What is taken for granted and what is important in the teaching of literature? What is it that we want our students to learn in our classes? How do we find out if students understand the concepts and aims of the literature lesson? How do we want our students to think, solve problems and conceptualise in the English literature classroom? How do we generate lessons and assignments that allow students to think critically about the literature? How do we correct misconceptions about what teachers of literature are supposed to do and be? These questions and others were adapted for discussion and debate in this study. They focus attention on an important question for this study: if student teachers are to become agents of change, what should teacher education programmes aim for?

McLaren and Baltodano (2000, 57) suggest that teacher education programmes should aim to produce ‘critical educators, community activists, organic individuals’ who advocate for social justice. They should use situated pedagogies that consider the relationship of teacher education to the communities and school populations that student teachers are likely to serve. Teacher education programmes that present generic pedagogical perspectives imply that schools are largely homogenous, potentially reinforcing stereotypes and bias. That is why it is important for teacher education programmes to highlight the cultures and cultural practices of groups, the realities of students’ daily lives, the strengths located in cultural and family practices as well as students’ individual strengths (Ladson-Billings 2009). Kailin (1994) makes the point that engaging with issues of student teachers’ social and cultural backgrounds, expectations, competencies, prejudices and biases in a teacher education programme will help to deepen their capacity for self-understanding. Student teachers should also be taught how to recognise forms of oppression in everyday interactions and practices, and in institutionalised structures.

Tatto (1998) suggests that participatory learning and reflection are more likely to influence student teachers’ views and encourage shared philosophies, views and understandings than conventionally structured programmes would. Goals and skills of change agency need to be made explicit, and student teachers need to ask, what difference am I trying to make? (Fullan 1993). Teacher education programmes should strive to produce teachers whose *modus operandi* and pedagogy are founded on moral and ethical objectives (Day 2004) and where the programmes enable student teachers to become both reflective and effective (Amobi 2006). Teacher education programmes must accordingly provide learning opportunities that encourage reflection, dialogue, critical thinking, knowledge ownership, and understanding in context and within learning communities (Tatto 1998; Ayers 2004). Jackson (1992, 4) suggests that student teachers use autobiographies to provide opportunities for the ‘critical examination and experience of difference’, Hollins (1990) proposes that student teachers construct personal and cultural autobiographies, and Gomez and Tabachnick (1992) advise student teachers to reflect critically on their experiences of teaching practice in diverse classrooms. King and Ladson-Billings (1990) recommend that teacher education programmes provide spaces for student teachers to identify similarities and differences in outlooks and experiences. Dewey (1904, 151) reminds us that student teachers need to be encouraged to become ‘thoughtful and alert students of education’, but without time and space for reflection, the student will pick up the technicalities and mechanics of teaching but fail to develop ‘as a

teacher, an inspirer and a director of soul-life'. Ultimately, those who strive for change anticipate not only begetting change, but also being changed themselves (Ayers 2004).

## **2.10. Broader concerns in the fields of teacher education and higher education**

While the study focusses on student teachers of literature becoming agents of change, one has to be aware of how the study engages with the broader concerns in teacher education and higher education. One of the conclusions of the South African Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (Soudien 2008) indicates that epistemological change and reconstruction remain critical challenges. The Report notes that most discourse on transformation in higher education focusses on skills and competencies, while disregarding the obligation to aid students' understanding of and role in the challenges of South Africa's socio-political context. In the South African education context, teacher education needs to assist students to identify the challenges of the education system and empower them to recognise their roles in confronting the challenges. This thesis focusses on the challenges, on ways of confronting the challenges and on becoming agents of change who can make a difference to students' lives in the classroom and beyond.

No one contests that building teachers' skills and competencies is crucially important. However, teachers can do more than transmit knowledge. Teachers need to understand their roles in their students' lives. Among the many requirements stipulated in the South African Council for Educators' (SACE) Code of Professional Ethics (2000) is the recognition of the need for teachers to enable students to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the South African Constitution. While teacher education programmes teach content, pedagogy and other technical aspects of teaching, the role of the teacher as change agent who can enable students to develop a set of values consistent with social justice issues is not emphasised.

Teacher education has the capacity and responsibility to produce teachers who can promote development and growth in their students, because of and despite the many problems that plague students and the societies in which they live. Cochran-Smith (2000) rightly asserts that lecturers in teacher education programmes have the responsibility to interrogate the implicit perspectives, discourses and assumptions embedded in courses and curricula, and to investigate their own complicity in maintaining existing systems of privilege and oppression. Engaging in self-interrogation will also assist lecturers to understand how they perpetuate

inequalities and impede transformation (Badat 2010). Only by acknowledging such challenges can lecturers transform themselves individually and collectively. Only then can they begin considering issues of change and transformation in their student teachers.

Student teachers entering South African teacher education programmes often emerge from dysfunctional school environments and have those environments as their points of reference. In schools, students are controlled and socialised into accepting certain behaviours and routines, and often work out what the “correct” answers are supposed to be. When these students move to universities, they struggle to ascertain what it is that different lecturers want (Anstey and Bull 2006). Anstey and Bull rightly indicate that students can be disadvantaged by the social interactions in a lecture-room because of the acculturating function and pedagogies used in their former schools.

Teacher educators therefore have to recognise the realities that students face and design courses with learning outcomes that are transformative and engaging to empower them to become skilled, effective teachers who are agents of change. From 1994, educational change in South Africa has focussed on transforming an apartheid curriculum. This study contends that change is now overdue on all fronts, and it is the teacher who has to serve as a catalyst for change. Moreover, student teachers need to explore, with their lecturers, how to embody, in skills, values and attitudes, the changes they want to elicit in the school environments that they are preparing to enter. Teacher education needs to articulate ways of teaching and learning in a diverse South African context, and this vision will need to infuse the entire curriculum to produce critically and culturally responsive teachers and students (Villegas and Lucas 2002).

In higher education in general, where teacher education programmes are located, teaching and learning relationships are often infused with power, dominance and authority (hooks 1994). Koro-Ljungberg (2007) makes it clear that students see lecturers as representatives of control and power, and this hierarchical structure ensures that lecturers’ social values are reinforced and legitimated by their dominant discourse (McKenna 2004). Heap (1999) and Baker (1999) point out that lecture-room discourse as an acculturating factor transmits knowledge and communicates how the university and community operate. Thus, if students come from social and cultural groups that are not the same as the dominant university group, then those students do not know the rules of engagement, cannot participate in the lecture setting, can feel deficient, and lack confidence in engaging in the teaching and learning process going on

around them (Anstey and Bull 2006). The students' silence or non-participation is then seen as disobedience, lack of co-operation or even lack of intelligence. Boler (2004) asks a very important question: How do we recognise the complexity of silence as a dynamic element of dialogue; how can silence be heard?

Even more important is that some students come to university having gained access to the practices and nuances of academic conventions and some have not. Universities, Boler (2004) points out, generally function as 'white men's clubs' – only certain individuals, who know the rules of behaviour, are welcomed, and they thrive in the familiar environment - and thus the 'white men's clubs' ethos empowers those who already hold privileged positions in society. To reinforce the existing hierarchy, different voices carry different weight. Some voices are heard better than others. Some students, hooks (1994) notes, come with the power to coerce, dominate and silence other voices. Some voices are silenced before they even start speaking. So, what happens to these silenced voices? McKenna (2004) observes that when students cannot read and write using the discourse of the dominant voices, these students are seen as a problem. Often, university lecturers want their students to use the lecturer's knowledge and the lecturer's norms, even if lecturers have not made them explicit, and when students fail to reach lecturers' expectations, lecturers use these norms to maintain the social order.

Researchers such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Ladson-Billings (2000) and Bernal (2002) have asked questions about whose norms, voices and knowledge count and whose norms, voices and knowledge are discarded. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) answer those questions by pointing out that knowledges of the upper and middle classes are knowledges that count, and to get those knowledges, you either are born with it or learn it at school, and in this way, society reproduces itself.

Boughey (2005) makes the point very clearly that students draw on different backgrounds to that of their lecturer because of differences in cultural contexts. Lecturers must also become aware of how their own literacy practices influence the way they conduct their classes. The lecture-room is ultimately a social environment and talk and social interactions happen in specific, planned ways where, it is hoped, meanings and understandings are shared. However, these assumptions will advantage some students and disadvantage others because of the diversity in cultures, languages and learning styles that students bring with them.

Yosso (2005) points out that lecturers often assume that institutions of higher education work, and that students, parents and communities need to change to conform to this already effective

and equitable system. If this is the thinking, it needs to be re-examined so that lecturers may face their own long-held prejudices and biases about who students are and can recognise that the knowledges that students bring with them are, in fact, valuable resources that should not be ignored. Yosso (2005) rightly notes that higher education institutions are not spaces of objectivity, meritocracy, colour-blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity for students. If university lecture-rooms are microcosms reflective of society's hierarchies of race, gender, class and homophobia that shape and mould the world, then there is a responsibility to talk about these issues and allow marginalised knowledges and literacies to be part of these discussions.

Possible ways forward include lecturers enabling students to think and analyse critically and be accountable for their opinions (Boler 2004), exposing students to experiences that will make them question their views and respect difference (Knight and Pearl 2000), and re-evaluating their own pedagogy so that it leads to new questions and new ways of dealing with a changing material and social environment (Simon 1992). McLaren (2003, 92) tells us that 'teaching and learning should be a process of inquiry, of critique; it should also be a process of constructing, of building a social imagination that works within a language of hope'.

## **2.11. Conclusion**

Using the fundamental principles of transformation and empowerment, critical pedagogy enables interrogation of the concepts of change, change agency and agents of change. While some challenges in the South African educational landscape are unique, many examples of teachers who have successfully served as agents of change may be emulated. In addition, the strategies used by effective engaged teachers, particularly in the literature classroom, to develop their learners academically and socially provide guidelines on possible ways forward. Finally, successful examples of programmes that aim to prepare student teachers to become agents of change provided spaces for interrogation by research participants in this study and allowed for reflection on broader concerns in higher education and teacher education.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 Introduction

This study worked with student teachers to empower them to become agents of change in their literature classrooms. Critical pedagogy was therefore chosen to serve as the theoretical framework of the study and it informed the decision to use a critical theory research paradigm, participatory action research design and qualitative research approach to answer the research questions, and motivations are indicated in this chapter for each case. The chapter also explains how the study was implemented indicating the site of the study, how participants were sampled, and the use of questionnaires, narrative research, observations, focus groups, interviews, drawings, written work and student evaluations as data collection strategies. An explanation is also provided of how the data was analysed. In addition,

limitations of the study are outlined and steps to address issues of reliability and validity are addressed.

### **3.2. Research paradigm**

This study used a critical theory research paradigm. Giroux (2009) alerts us to the fact that critical theory has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it refers to a school of thought with a critical underpinning developed by a group of socio-political analysts known as the Frankfurt School. It is within this school of thought that critical pedagogy (discussed in chapter two) is located. On the other hand, critical theory also refers to a research paradigm (which this study uses) that informs a process of self-conscious critique where researchers problematise social relations, particularly those within the practices of power (Tripp 1992). Critical theory is based on the use of critique as a method of investigation that seeks to confront all forms of discrimination and injustices, so that society may become more just, humane, and rational (McLaren 1991; Jensen 1997). Critical theory recognises the need to develop a discourse of social transformation and emancipation. However, researchers need to resist rigid adherence to the philosophical assumptions of the paradigm (Giroux 2009).

In an educational setting such as a university, lecturers who use a critical theory paradigm tend to believe that education is not a neutral, apolitical activity. Instead, education is seen to have transformative possibilities and provide opportunities for progress, even if there are obstacles to transformation (Freire 1998; Torres 1998). The strong transformative possibilities of research propelled this study in its aim to engage student teachers to become agents of change in their school classrooms. However, using critical theory in this study required much more than engagement with transformation. It had to challenge existing practices and systems and attempt to understand what makes practices and systems operate the way they do. Further, while challenging and understanding, using critical theory required an awareness that the researcher's and the student teachers' own recognitions of justice and equality were likewise open to question (Tripp 1992). The dialectical nature of critical theory means that an educational institution cannot be seen only as an area of socialisation or a space for instruction. It has also to be recognised as a cultural site that advances students' empowerment, self-transformation and ability to change (McLaren 2009).

Critical theorists seek to understand human experience as a means of changing the world, and the common purpose of researchers who approach investigation through critical theory is to promote social change (Kincheloe and McLaren 2002). Thus, while student teachers in this

study critiqued teaching practices and teaching philosophies, they ultimately aimed for transformation and thus emancipation from previously held ideas of what a teacher of literature should be.

The student teachers were aware however that many factors are at play in the research process, one of which is the use of critical theory as a research paradigm. Conceptually, critical theory focusses on power and justice, and with the ways that the ideologies and discourses of economy, race, class, gender, education, religion and culture interact to construct a social system (Kincheloe and McLaren 2002). The focus of this study was questions of race, class, culture, gender, and identity, among others as they are represented in literary texts. The student teachers in the study engaged with the issues in the text and considered how they would work with their learners, all of whom will have their own values, to confront the issues both in and beyond the texts.

Ontologically, critical theory posits reality as being governed by people's conflicting social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values. Critical theory recognises, however, that people are also able to design and reconstruct their own worlds through their own actions and critical reflections (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Aspirations may be realised by people becoming empowered to change their situations and conditions for themselves by themselves (Tripp 1992). To achieve their goals, student teachers in this study had to reflect on their values, objectives in becoming teachers, own identities as teachers of literature, roles and responsibilities, and identities as agents of change. Student teachers recognised that becoming an agent of change required more than critical engagement with issues. They embraced Freire's (1972) comments that critical educators needed to have deep knowledge of their academic disciplinary subject matter, be very familiar with curriculum demands and pedagogical innovations, and use critical engagement in their classrooms. In the study, the student teachers focussed therefore on the academic disciplinary content required for teaching English literature, became very familiar with the requirements of the DoE curriculum documents, learnt about and experienced innovative pedagogical practices and methodologies, and used both knowledge and critical engagement to move them towards becoming agents of change.

Critical theory conceptualises knowledge as a source of power made up of experiences and social relations, and participants read events and issues within their social and economic contexts. In this study, the aim of the critical theory approach was thus to address social issues

in a specific context, and increase student teachers' critical consciousness of the norms, values and practices that mould their worlds (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The researcher understood that both she and the student teachers entered the research process with their own particular values and practices, and that these had to be respected. Together, they decided to use the overarching guidelines of the South African Constitution as the means by which to engage with norms, values and practices, in particular, those that hide power structures.

Methodologically, critical theory suggests that the researcher serves as an advocate and activist (Guba and Lincoln 1994). This approach enables the researcher to adopt the role of a facilitator who encourages the involvement of participants who become partners in the research process. Critical theory acknowledges the extent to which the researcher and participants are self-reflective and value-driven (Jensen 1997).

Tripp (1992) expands the methodological principles of research using a critical paradigm. Tripp identifies seven principles that underpin critical research. The first deals with participation, where research is found to be most effective if conducted by mutually supporting groups. The second principle is direction, where the emancipatory interests of the participants direct the aims and methodology used. The next principle deals with problematising consciousness and the values embedded in it. Recognising that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed and are thus held differently by different people comprises the fourth principle. The fifth principle understands that critical theory works on changing constraints rather than working within them. As a sixth principle, the concept of outcomes deals with seeking to develop new practices rather than making old practices more efficient. The final principle relates to the audience, where the primary audience for research findings are the participants themselves, not necessarily outside readers.

Research, thus, becomes much more than recording information. Instead, it is actively engaged in promoting social change in the system within which it works (McCarthy 1991; Hoy and McCarthy 1994). Student teachers in this study embraced the need to change the South African education system by serving as agents of change in their classrooms. By using a critical theory paradigm, interrogating various literary theories and critical pedagogy, actively working with issues in literary texts and taking the issues beyond the texts, grappling with various pedagogies that will engage learners in their classrooms, and developing strategies that will develop their learners both academically and socially, participants sought to move closer to becoming agents of change.

This study, like all studies that aim to be critical, had to confront what has been wrong in a specific social context, and then move towards change and transformation (Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg 2011). Ultimately, social justice and democracy informed the study’s research design, research approach, methods and outcomes (Tripp 1992; Torre et al. 2012).

### 3.3. Research design

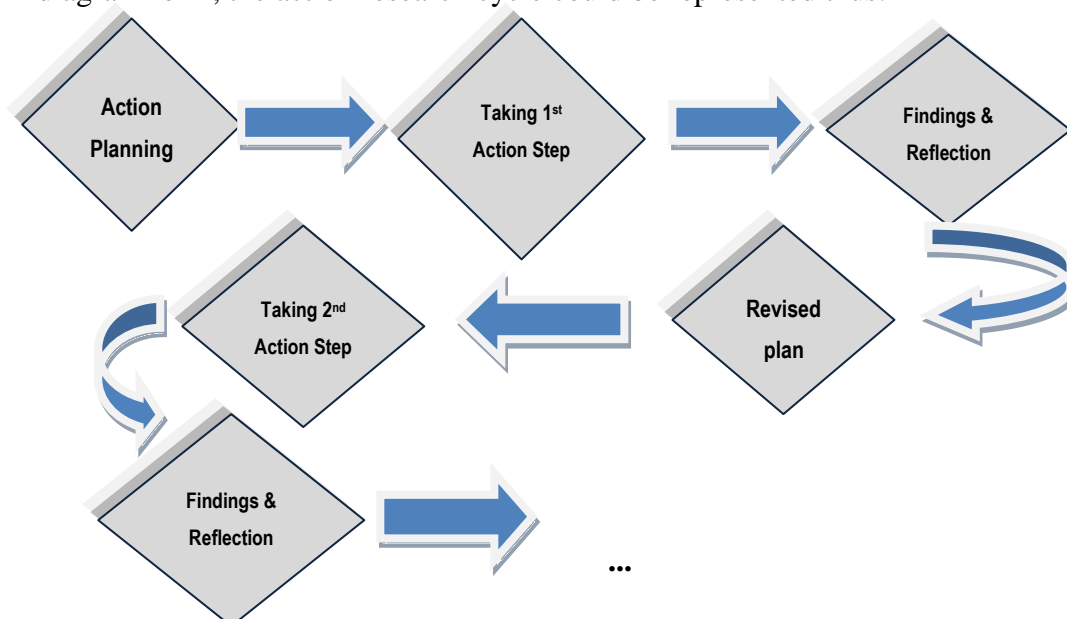
This study used participatory action research, a form of action research, as the basis for its research design.

#### 3.3.1. Action research

##### 3.3.1.1. Definitions and aims

Action research is a participatory, democratic process that brings together ‘action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people’ (Reason and Bradbury 2001, 1). In action research, knowledge is socially created, research is set in a system of values that encourages human interaction, and the research confronts unfair and inequitable economic, social and political systems and practices (Reason and Bradbury 2003). It aims to be responsive to the emerging needs of a situation, and the results of action research should lead to improved actions in a specific situation (Avison et al. 1999; Dick 2000; Boog 2003). However, other researchers could consider the results of the research in relation to other contexts.

In diagram form, the action research cycle could be represented thus:



### **Action research cycle: Figure A**

#### **3.3.1.2. History of action research**

Dewey is credited as the first author to use action research principles and elements in his philosophical work and in his studies in education (Dewey 1929), but the term itself was coined by Lewin in the course of his collaborative, experiential, action-oriented research in the 1940s which focussed on group dynamics with a liberation purpose (Lewin 1951; Reason and Bradbury 2003; Minkler 2004; Burgess 2006). Lewin (1946, 34) conducted research that used ‘a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action’. More than just procedural, Lewin’s spiral of steps is underpinned by a commitment to social enquiry where outcomes lead in turn to further social action (McTaggart 1996).

Forms of action research were at that time and beyond undertaken by labour organisations and proponents of liberation theology. In 1948, Sol Tax used action anthropology to promote collaboration and implement democratisation processes with local stakeholders. Freire adopted an action research approach in confronting oppression, exerting pressure for change, and researchers such as Argyris, Reason and Heron built on Freire’s work in various organisations and countries (Argyris 1970; Argyris, Putnam and Smith 1985; Heron 1996; Reason 1999; Heron and Reason 2000; Reason and Bradbury 2006). In the 1970s, Fals-Borda used participatory action research in which participatory methods and designs enabled the involvement of community members in all aspects of the research process (Fals-Borda 2001; van der Meulen 2011).

#### **3.3.1.3. Schools of thought associated with action research**

The five major schools of thought associated with action research include Argyris’ action science which considers how human beings design their actions in various settings and advocates an approach to research that is concerned with creating knowledge that has a practical value to solving problems (Argyris 1970; Argyris, Putnam and Smith 1985). The second school of thought is Heron’s co-operative inquiry, also known as collaborative inquiry (Heron 1996; Heron and Reason 2000), which recognises all participants engaged in the research decisions as co-researchers. He formally introduced the idea of research ‘with’ people rather than ‘on’ people (Heron’s punctuation). Torbert’s developmental action inquiry is the third school of thought (Torbert 1991) which simultaneously uses action and inquiry as a leadership exercise that improves participants’ effectiveness as they become more

imaginative, attentive, just and capable of sustained transformation. The fourth school of thought is living theory proposed by Whitehead and expanded on with McNiff (Whitehead and McNiff 2006) where participants produce accounts of the educational influences in their learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social structures. Their concern is identifying how to improve the researcher's practices. Living theory proponents use action reflection cycles of articulating fears and unease, expounding action strategies, taking action and collecting data, assessing the effects of action, and adjusting ideas and action in the light of evaluations. The final school of thought is Freire's participatory action research that is an approach for intervention, development and change within communities and groups (Freire 1999). Participatory action research builds on Freire's critical pedagogy, used as a theoretical framework in this study, which confronts traditional formal models of education where the teacher is the fount of all knowledge who imparts information to learners who are seen as passive recipients. This study has chosen to use participatory action research (discussed later in this chapter) because of its synergy with both critical theory and critical pedagogy. It has also been chosen because it is seen to be the most effective research design to achieve the aims of this study.

#### **3.3.1.4. Tensions in action research**

Reason and Bradbury (2001) note that action research as a general framing concept reflects three main tensions. The first tension exists between research that is driven by the researcher's agenda and research driven by participants. The second tension is identified as research motivated by instrumental goal accomplishment or research motivated by the aim of personal, organisational, or societal transformation. The final tension considers whether the research is first-person research, second-person research or third-person research. First-person research studies one's own practice and is aimed at personal change. Second-person research studies and works with a group with the aim of improving the group and the research process, results and outcomes should have tangible benefits for the community involved. Third-person research is scholarly research aimed primarily at theoretical generalisation and/or large-scale change. This study was driven jointly by the researcher's and student teachers' agendas; it was motivated by the aim of personal transformation of student teachers and ultimately their learners in their classrooms; and the research was second-person research that worked with a group of student teachers who sought to become agents of change in their English literature classrooms.

### **3.3.1.5. Educational applications of action research**

Like this study, action research in an educational context may be used to improve practices through critical investigation, intervention and reflection, leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and empowerment and emancipation of both the teacher and students (McNiff and Whitehead 2006; Sowa 2009). While action research has its roots in Dewey's ideas about reflective practice (Sowa 2009), Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) point out that action research allows teachers and their students to move beyond personal reflection to more rigorous and structured examinations of other challenges they might encounter.

Teachers in higher education can use systematic, controlled action research to 'become more professional, more interested in pedagogical aspects of higher education and motivated to integrate their research and teaching interests in a holistic way' (Zuber-Skerritt 1982, 15).

Thus, using action research can lead to 'greater job satisfaction, better academic programmes, improvement of student learning and teachers' insights and contributions to the advancement of knowledge in higher education' (Zuber-Skerritt 1982, 15).

### **3.3.1.6. Implementing action research**

In the implementation of action research, Whitehead and McNiff (2006) suggest three questions that researchers should ask: What are we doing? What do we need to improve? How do we improve it? To answer these questions, researchers first reflect on and achieve a deep understanding of the situation (Oettle and Law 2005) and they share their knowledge and goals with persons involved in the research (Heron and Reason 2000). Before proceeding with their research, researchers have to understand the nature and spirit of action research.

Only once there is understanding of how action research operates can the research process continue. The second stage involves problematising issues, working out a solution to the problem, and coming to consensus on actions, including the process and proposed outcomes. The plan is then acted upon, and the researcher observes, interprets, and evaluates the process and consequences of the change. Thereafter, the change is reflected upon and re-planning takes place where the same or another process of change is implemented (Heron and Reason 2000; Oettle and Law 2005; Whitehead and McNiff 2006).

Action research can thus involve a spiral of cycles of research, experiential learning and action (Boog 2003). Because of the recurring action and reflection, action research is often viewed as a work in progress with many unanswered queries and unsolved debates (Reason and Bradbury 2003). Rearick and Feldman (1999, 335) also note that in action research,

researchers ‘can become increasingly aware of ... inequalities, and of the interconnections between knowledge and power’. What is important for the researcher is to confront inequalities, expose abuses of power, grapple with queries, engage in debates and theorise findings which emerge at each point in the research. In action research, theory can and should be generated through practice. Ultimately, action research confronts conventional, established social science research by re-aligning research that goes beyond reflective data produced by external authorities appraising variables to active moment-by-moment theorising, data gathering, and investigations arising in the midst of an evolving, developing structure (Torbert 1991). Action researchers therefore need to consider how they generate and produce knowledge that is valid and fundamental to the interests of individuals, communities or for larger social change.

### **3.3.2. Participatory action research**

For this study, the researcher and student teachers used participatory action research, a form of action research, to enable progressive social change. Change is possible through theory and knowledge creation which emerges from dialogue between the participants and the researcher (Levin 1994; Flood 1998). While participatory action research employs many fundamental characteristics of action research, it is also distinctly different. As Molano (1998, 1) notes, ‘After twenty years of action research, researchers were interested in walking shoulder to shoulder with ordinary people rather than one step ahead’. Participatory action research ‘is a means of putting research capabilities in the hands of the ... people so that they can transform their lives for themselves’ (Park 1993, 1). In this study, student teachers recognised their choices and responsibilities, and the power that they wielded in transforming themselves into agents of change. Participatory action research, which is rooted in notions of democratic participation and social justice, is of immediate interest to its participants (in this case, student teachers) in the studied community and the outcomes of the research affect them directly. It includes voices from groups not normally heard, credits community knowledge, modifies the role of the researcher to listener, works towards social justice, and necessitates recognising the power of and power relations between all participants. Drawing on the principles of critical theory and critical pedagogy (Hagey 1997; Baker Collins 2005; Swantz 2008; Torre et al. 2012), participatory action research has been recognised as a sound choice in pursuing the aim of making research an agent of transformation (Swantz 2008) and, in this case, the student teachers agents of change.

To ensure democratic participation and social justice in the research process, Hagey (1997) advises that the four concepts of equity, restitution, justice and autonomy must underpin the research. Acknowledgement of disadvantage (and thereby recognition for equity) paves the way for admitting that institutions and structures are responsible for creating inequalities that should be redressed. Such institutions and structures marginalise certain groups and work towards maintaining the *status quo*, a situation that needs to change to achieve restitution. Justice thus has to be sought to address issues of prejudice, intolerance and opposition to change. The final concept is autonomy, where participants are respected, the researcher does not speak on participants' behalf and the researcher reports to and is accountable to the participants. The researcher and student teachers in this study affirmed their commitment to the four underpinning concepts and returned to them at various stages throughout the research process.

During the participatory action research process, the three guiding principles of demystification, hegemony and reflexivity assisted the researcher and student teachers in deciding how they should act and research (Hagey 1997). These three principles are in synergy with critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework. Demystification refers to the intent and assessment of the research process. All participants and the researcher need to understand where power lies, where there is disadvantage, where there is failure to advocate, or where merit is not being acknowledged. This process is the starting point for Freire's method of 'conscientisation' which may be loosely defined as critical consciousness or deep understanding of the political and social contradictions in the world. Conscientisation is usually followed by action against the oppressive elements recognised as political and social contradictions (Freire 2005).

Hegemony points to the idea that only when a community of researchers is aware of how they contribute to their own oppression can they begin the empowerment process. Gramsci (1971) notes that every person has the ability to shed layers of mystification and to make choices based on sound knowledge rather than what is often termed 'common sense' or 'normal'.

Reflexivity is where the participants and the researcher reflect on and challenge their own views in the knowledge that all research is biased and partial towards the vested interests of both the researcher and the participants. Most importantly, in this study, the student teachers and the researcher needed to engage actively and reflexively with issues of the research that affected them (Foucault 1970).

Drawing on Foucault's suggestion that participants work with issues that affect them, Hall (1981) suggests that the issue being studied should originate from the group, community or workplace. In this study, while the student teachers were not responsible for suggesting the idea for the research, they embraced wholeheartedly the idea of student teachers of literature becoming agents of change and recognised that it would be an important concern for their future careers, professional identities and professionalism in their workplaces. They also recognised that the concepts of change and change agency were completely marginalised in their teacher education programme. Since the study worked with student teachers' descriptions and understandings of change and transformation, the researcher chose a research approach that focussed on in-depth accounts and interpretations.

### **3.4. Research approach**

This study used a qualitative research approach despite its potential limitations. Qualitative research data may not apply to other contexts, predictions are not possible, data collection and data analysis are time-consuming, and researcher bias and prejudice could affect results (Johnson and Christensen 2004). In addition, poorly-conducted qualitative research may fail to provide adequate justification for interpretations, and may fail to give a satisfactory account of how analysis has been undertaken (Costas 1992; Onwuegbuzie 2003).

However, a qualitative research approach was favoured because it is useful for studying issues in-depth and for describing complex phenomena. Participants' words assist the researcher to explore and make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meanings participants bring to them. It focusses on the span, scope and extent of a phenomenon (such as change agency or becoming an agent of change) to learn more about it (Johnson and Christensen 2004). Such an approach is non-numeric (Greenhalgh and Taylor 1997) and emerges from words, images and categories. When working with qualitative research, the research design, data collection techniques and analysis strategies need to be considered (Patton 2002).

A qualitative research design provides for comparisons, understandings, descriptions, and interpretations of participants' experiences, and focusses on dynamic processes unfolding in their natural settings (an English Education lecture-room), and in the context in which the behaviour occurs (a teacher education programme at a South African university). In a natural setting, researchers and, in this case, student teachers are open to whatever develops without manipulating or controlling situations, and adapting the study as findings emerge.

The research design is flexible, fluid, and adapts to changes in situations and/or as understanding deepens. Such designs challenge the researcher and participants who have to constantly reflect on and evaluate the research process and, when necessary, improve the research design to ensure valid conclusions (Patton 2002; Durrheim 2009). Research is thus viewed as an iterative process that requires an adaptable, non-sequential approach. In this study, participatory action research and a qualitative research approach reinforced each other, as student teachers and the researcher were open to allowing the findings to determine the study's progress and adapted the study as the situation changed.

In qualitative research, the use of qualitative data collection methods necessitates researchers having close, direct contact with participants, and researchers have to acknowledge that their experiences and insights will become part of the study and be important to a deeper understanding of the research situation (Patton 2002). For the researcher of this study, the need to reflect and re-examine her own practices and thought processes became integral to the research process. While the objective of the study was to investigate how student teachers of literature might become agents of change, the researcher, too, while implementing change, also had to reflect on her own beliefs and practices.

### **3.5. Site selection**

The study was conducted in English Education lecture-rooms in a School of Education at a South African university and worked with student teachers studying to teach English as a home language or English as a first additional language in a four-year Bachelor of Education degree (See Chapter One). The study also worked with a sample of student teachers after they had qualified and started teaching.

The researcher chose to work with all the student teachers in these classes because she was teaching them literature and had access to them. Within the critical theory research paradigm and participatory action research design, the researcher had to be aware of the power dynamics of her role as lecturer, assessor, curriculum planner and researcher, and had to factor in those dynamics when working with the student teachers in the design and development of the study.

### **3.6. Sampling**

While the study worked with and collected some data from all student teachers in the English Education lecture-room, some data was collected from a purposeful sample. For example, the

observations, written work, student evaluations and drawings involved all student teachers in the study and the focus groups, interviews and teaching practice observations worked with a purposeful sample of student teachers.

Patton (2002) suggests that qualitative research should use purposeful sampling, a non-random sampling technique where the researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and locates individuals who match those characteristics. In this study, a purposeful sample was chosen in terms of student teachers' race and gender on the grounds that these two variables represented insights from various perspectives on the phenomena being investigated (See Summary of data collection: Table C).

### 3.7. The study

An outline of the study is presented in table form, followed by a detailed explanation.

1st year of the study: 3rd-year student teachers					
CYCLE 1: 3rd-year student teachers (English Education Major 310: Semester 1)					
Text	Research Methods	Literary Theory	Issues under scrutiny	Pedagogy	Agent of change
<i>The Madonna of Excelsior</i> by Zakes Mda (Novel)	Class observations; Written work; Student evaluations	Practical Criticism; Reader Response; Marxism; Feminism	Class, race and culture; Gender and patriarchy (individuals); Identity	Newspaper articles; Reading aloud; Interviews with author; Pictures; Group and pair-work; Class discussion	Unpacking terms; Class discussion; Written work; Interpreting visual representations
CYCLE 2: 3rd-year student teachers (English Education Major 320: semester 2)					
Text	Research Methods	Literary Theory	Issues under scrutiny	Pedagogy	Agent of change
<i>The Colour of Paradise</i> written and directed by Majid Majidi (Film)	Written work; Focus group; Student evaluations	Reader / viewer response; Marxism; Feminism; Film Theory	Tolerance and resilience	Film and film clips; Film critiques; Group and pair-work; Class discussion	Class discussion; Written work

<b>CYCLE 3: 3rd-year student teachers (English Education Major 310: Semester 2)</b>					
<b>Text</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Literary Theory</b>	<b>Issues under scrutiny</b>	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Agent of change</b>
<i>Sophiatown</i> by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company (Play)	Written work; Individual interviews; Student evaluations	New historicism, cultural materialism; feminism; critical literacy	Class, race and culture; Gender and patriarchy (by State); Identity	Newspaper articles; Reading aloud; Poetry; Articles; Interviews with residents of the time; Pictures; DVD containing pictures and music of the time; Music; Role-play – Group and pair-work; Teacher-in-role; Hot-seating; Class discussion	Class discussion; Written work
<b>2nd year of the study: 4th-year student teachers</b>					
<b>CYCLE 4: 4th-year student teachers (English Education Major 410: Semester 1)</b>					
<b>Text</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Literary Theory</b>	<b>Issues under scrutiny</b>	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Agent of change</b>
<i>The God of Small Things</i> by Arundhati Roy (Novel)	Class observation; Written work; Student evaluations	Marxism; Feminism; Postcolonialism; Critical Literacy	Class, race and culture; Gender and patriarchy; Identity; Tolerance and resilience	Reading aloud; Articles; Interviews with author; DVD containing images and music of Kerala (where the novel is set); Group and pair-work; Class discussion	Class discussion; Written work
<b>CYCLE 5: 4th-year student teachers (English Education Major 420: Semester 2)</b>					
<b>Text</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Literary Theory</b>	<b>Issues under scrutiny</b>	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Agent of change</b>
<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i> – written by William Shakespeare; directed by Kenneth Branagh (Film)	Written work; Focus group; Student evaluations	Reader / viewer response; Marxism; Feminism; Film Theory; Critical Literacy	Gender and patriarchy	Film and film clips; Film critiques; Interviews with director and film crew; Debates; Group and pair-work; Class discussion	Class discussion; Written work; Problem-solving activities

CYCLE 6: 4th-year student teachers (English Education Major 420: Semester 2)					
Text	Research Methods	Literary Theory	Issues under scrutiny	Pedagogy	Agent of change
<i>The Tempest</i> by William Shakespeare (Play)	Written work; Individual interviews; Student evaluations	Feminism; Postcolonialism; Critical Literacy	Class, race and culture; Gender and patriarchy	Pictures; Reading aloud; Articles; Debates; Problem-solving activities; Clips from the film version; Group and pair-work; Class discussion	Class discussion; Written work; Problem-solving activities; Presenting visual representations

**The study: Table A**

### 3.7.1. Issues emerging from the pilot study

Prior to the start of the study itself, the research process was piloted with groups of student teachers to ascertain problems in the research process and flaws in the research instruments. Six main issues emerged.

Firstly, the pilot had not adequately prepared the pilot-group for change and they appeared to resist the need for it. Secondly, the group had no part in the planning of the study, had not engaged sufficiently with the research process and underlying principles and was not enthusiastic about being involved. The third issue was that, despite knowing that participatory action research worked with a flexible, changeable framework, the researcher attempted to use a rigid structure in the implementation of the research process. The structured framework had to be abandoned as the data collected yielded results which reflected the inflexibility of the process. The researcher discovered that the cycle of planning, action and reflection had to respond to the data presented, not to predetermined structures.

The fourth issue was identified at the end of the pilot. After considering all the data gathered, it was decided to add one more data collection strategy, the use of drawings, to engage student teachers' understandings of key concepts identified in the research questions. The fifth issue related to the instruments and data collection strategies used. The questionnaire was shortened by removing questions that did not address the issues of the study. In addition, all questions were removed that had ambiguous wording, leading and double-barrelled questions and the use of double negatives. Further, it was realised that researcher's notes and reflections had to be written up immediately after data collection so that information was not forgotten. Finally, the researcher had to make a determined effort to forgo the impartiality and detachment that

had characterised her previous research. Much introspection and reading was required to embrace the combined ethos of participatory action research, critical pedagogy, critical theory and a qualitative research approach.

Once problems were identified and rectified, the study proceeded. This thesis reports on the findings of the study itself and not on the pilot-study. This decision has been made for practical reasons of space and time, and because the pilot-study was seriously flawed.

### **3.7.2. Questionnaires and narrative research to collect baseline information**

The first step in this study entailed collecting baseline information, in keeping with the requirements of participatory action research. Baseline information enables the researcher to understand how participants perceive and experience concepts and events before the implementation of interventions, and informs the researcher on how to proceed.

Collection of baseline information took three different forms – questionnaires addressed to practising teachers of English literature; narrative research with practising teachers to ascertain, through their stories, their understandings of the key concepts and questions in the research; and questionnaires addressed to student teacher participants. While practising teachers were not the focus of the study, their views were deemed important for an understanding of those already working in the field, which the student teachers were preparing to enter.

In this study, the first step was thus to administer questionnaires to practising teachers (See Appendix E: Questionnaire: Practising teachers). The researcher followed the suggestion made by Johnson and Christensen (2004) that questionnaires should be constructed to answer each research question, be clear, concise and short, employ familiar language, and be easy to use. In the study, the questionnaires asked practising teachers to define their understandings of the following concepts: effective, engaged teachers; ineffective teachers; agents of change. Practising teachers were also asked if they thought they would be agents of change in their future classrooms, if they believed that they could help their learners to grow, and if they felt that literary texts could serve as catalysts for them to become agents of change. The questionnaires helped in understanding attitudes and were useful tools for exploration. They were also useful in determining whether the concepts being grappled with in the lecture-room were also considered in the school classroom. Each question in the questionnaire included opportunities for respondents to expand on how they might achieve the aims and the open-

ended questions allowed for expansion of ideas in the respondents' own words (Wiersma 1986).

The questionnaires served their purpose well in that they were easy to administer and enable the collation of substantial quantities of information in a relatively short space of time. Using a uniform questionnaire and avoiding verbal or visual influence gave the researcher a less intrusive instrument for data collection with reduced potential for bias (Sanders and Pinhey 1983; Dane 1990; Gorard 2003). Anonymity also heightened freedom of responses and participants found it easy to share information (Seliger and Shohamy 1990). The questionnaires did present some challenges for the researcher in relation to the gestures and other visual cues that would commonly be at play in communication. Absence of such cues complicated assessment of how participants understood key concepts (Dane 1990; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001). The researcher was also unable to probe responses, and open-ended questions were time-consuming to analyse. In addition, as Cohen and Manion (2000) have noted, questionnaire respondents may be inclined to give answers which they think are expected of them rather than saying what they really think. Further, Seliger and Shohamy (1990) point out that respondents may not all be equally conversant with the language used in a questionnaire. All of these possible obstacles had to be kept in mind once data analysis commenced.

Each of the twenty-two practising teachers, who had responded to the questionnaires, was then asked to conduct narrative research with a colleague who taught English literature at their schools. Thus the teachers who filled in the questionnaires served as teacher-researchers themselves, conducting narrative research with their colleagues. Narrative research recognises that there is no single dominant reality, and that a number of different realities are constructed in individuals' minds through social interactions. Narrative research works on the idea that we make sense of our experiences through stories (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). The teacher-researchers requested that their colleagues use narratives to answer four questions: What does it mean to teach literature to students? How do teachers of literature become better teachers of literature? How do teachers of literature help their learners grow? How can teachers of literature serve as agents of change in the school classroom?

The teacher-researchers were reminded to allow their colleagues to express their stories through their own telling (Polkinghorne 1995) and to serve as good listeners to the voices of their colleagues. The researcher and student teachers regarded it as essential that practising

teachers of English literature answer the research questions and unpack their ideas about the key concepts in the research to ascertain the level of engagement with the concepts. If practising teachers resisted change or if they could not recognise the potential of literary texts to effect academic and social change in their learners, then student teachers needed to understand the environments they would be entering and the thinking of their future peers. However, if practising teachers embraced critique, change and learner empowerment and saw themselves as agents of change, then student teachers would recognise the support they might experience. In addition, practising teachers' stories and professional identities gave student teachers important insights into what to expect in their future professions.

The third part of the baseline information collection process involved the student teachers. A questionnaire similar to that administered to practising teachers was administered to sixty-six participating student teachers (See Appendix F: Questionnaires: Student teachers), with additional questions to ascertain their reading histories and their school experiences of literature.

### **3.7.3. Interventions**

The data collected from student teachers and practising teachers was designed to ascertain baseline information to determine how to proceed. Once the baseline information was analysed, all student teachers in the study discussed and determined what the first set of interventions needed to be. According to Cummings and Worley (2005), interventions refer to a set of planned actions designed to increase the effectiveness of a situation, and deliberately disrupt current practices. Effective interventions need to be relevant to the needs of a situation, based on causal knowledge of intended outcomes, and designed so that implementation can be transferred to the participants (Argyris 1970).

Each cycle of the participatory action research comprised an intervention designed by the researcher and the student teachers to ascertain the extent to which the research questions were being answered. When designing interventions, situational factors needed to be considered (Cummings and Worley 2005) which include readiness for change, capability to change, the cultural context of the change, and the capabilities of the persons implementing the change. Readiness for change implies an acknowledgement that there are pressures to change, dissatisfaction with current practices, and a commitment to change. Capability to change refers to the implementers of the change (the researcher and student teachers) who should be able to manage the change and sustain the momentum that the interventions build.

The third situational factor calls for all participants to consider the cultural context, cultural values and assumptions of the group. Finally, the implementers of the interventions have to be prepared and able to implement the interventions.

The interventions worked within the participatory action research spiral of cycles and at each cycle, the intervention was implemented, observed, reflected on and theorised before further action. Interventions used the literary text as a springboard to focus on the literary theories, the issues under scrutiny, the innovative pedagogical tools, and the unpacking of the concept 'agent of change'.

All texts were from students' prescribed reading list. Although the literary texts explored with student teachers in the English Education lecture-rooms were not those currently being taught at schools, exploration and analysis of the texts sought to develop the capacity and skills that would be transferable to the reading of any literary text.

The study used texts to implement pedagogical and philosophical interventions focussed on strategies to produce effective, engaged teachers of literature (Key Question 1). Issues of pedagogy were important, especially pedagogy involving interactive, effective, and engaged teaching (Key Question 1). The selected texts were also studied as examples for exploring how a literary text could help learners develop academically and socially (Key Question 2). Further, these texts served as valuable springboards to investigate how the use of literary texts assisted student teachers to become agents of change in their classrooms (Key Question 3). The researcher implemented interventions using modelling behaviour and direct presentations. The researcher and student teachers also experienced interventions through experiential learning and joint negotiation of answers.

After each cycle, different research methods were used to collect data on the effectiveness of the interventions in facilitating student teachers becoming agents of change. The data collected served to inform participants what the next cycle should comprise. Data collected also informed the conclusions drawn at the end of the study.

### **3.8. Data collection strategies**

McNiff (2002) suggests that action researchers should gather data using a range of research methods to expand their understanding of the research situation. In this study, data collection methods included lecture-room and classroom observations, focus groups, interviews,

drawings, written work and student evaluations. An outline of the data collection plan is presented in table form, followed by a detailed explanation of the data collection methods.

	Data source	No. of units
<b>1st year of study</b>		
<b>Baseline information</b>	Questionnaires	66 student teachers
	Questionnaires	22 practising teachers
	Narrative research	22 practising teachers (different from above)
<b>1st year of study: 3<sup>rd</sup> year student teachers</b>		
<b>Semester one: English Education Major 310</b>		
Cycle one	Observation	1 class (Eng. Educ. Major 310)
	Drawings	58 student teachers
	Written Work	56 student teachers
	Student Evaluations	60 student teachers
<b>Semester two: English Education Major 320</b>		
Cycle two	Focus Group	1 (8 student teachers)
	Written Work	44 student teachers
	Student Evaluations	48 student teachers
Cycle three	Interviews	10 student teachers
	Written work	46 student teachers
	Student Evaluations	45 student teachers
<b>2nd year of study: 4th year student teachers</b>		
<b>Semester one: English Education Major 410</b>		
Cycle four	Observation	1 class (Eng. Educ. Major 410)
	Written Work	38 student teachers
	Student Evaluations	36 student teachers
<b>4<sup>th</sup> year: Teaching Practice</b>	Observation	7 student teachers (x2 visits)
<b>Semester two: English Education Major 420</b>		

Cycle five	Focus Group	1 (8 student teachers)
	Written work	30 student teachers
	Student Evaluations	30 student teachers
Cycle six	Interviews	6 student teachers
	Written Work	28 student teachers
	Drawings	35 student teachers
	Student Evaluations	32 student teachers
<b>3rd year of study</b>		
<b>Novice teachers</b>	Interviews	4 novice teachers

**Summary of Data Collection Plan: Table B**

### **3.8.1. Observations**

Observations were carried out in cycles one and four of the study (See Appendix G: Lecture-room observations) and in school classrooms during Teaching Practice between cycles four and five (See Appendix H: Teaching Practice observations). Greenhalgh and Taylor (1997) define qualitative observations as the systematic watching by a researcher of behaviour and talk in particular settings, either natural or structured. In qualitative research, observations are exploratory, confirmatory, open-ended, and field notes are used extensively. The researcher in this study served as participant as observer where the researcher spent time with participants over a prolonged period, and informed the participants that they were being observed.

Lectures in English Education lecture-rooms were observed in order to answer the research questions. As the lecturer, the researcher engaged student teachers in the lecture-room and observed both the teaching and learning that occurred therein, and field notes were written up after each session.

Observations were also carried out in seven school classrooms where fourth year student teachers were involved in Teaching Practice. After initial meetings, the researcher observed each student on two occasions to ascertain the extent to which strategies and interventions implemented in the lecture-room were applied in the school classroom setting. In this non-participant observation, the researcher sought to determine what strategies student teachers used in their classrooms to produce effective engaging literature lessons and to help learners

develop academically and socially. The observation also aimed to identify what student teachers did to represent themselves as agents of change.

The observations in the lecture-rooms and in school classrooms proved useful since they helped to evaluate what was happening in the lecture-room, and in the student teachers' classrooms it was possible to see what student teachers were actually doing rather than what they said they were doing. Observations also allowed the researcher to understand what did not occur, and what participants were reluctant to discuss (Johnson and Christensen 2004).

The researcher was aware, however, that participants might behave uncharacteristically if they knew they were being watched, what Johnson and Christensen (2004) call reactive effects, and could have motives for particular behaviours that might not have been apparent to the researcher. From the researcher's perspective, she had to be aware that prejudices towards and opinions of the participants could influence the observation, what Johnson and Christensen (2004) call investigator effects. In addition, the analysis of data obtained from observations was time-consuming, largely because the observations revealed some information that was considered unimportant to the research questions and had to be removed from the analysis. Finally, throughout the observations, both in the lecture-rooms and in the school classrooms, the researcher had to be aware of observer bias and observer distortion. Observer bias can appear if the researcher makes premeditated, calculated choices about which data to observe and which to disregard. Observer distortion can occur if the researcher intentionally and deliberately distorts the information due to preconceptions and prejudices.

### **3.8.2. Focus groups**

Focus groups, comprising eight student teachers, were conducted after cycle two in the first year of the study and after cycle five in the second year of the study (See Appendix I: Focus group interviews: Student teachers). A focus group is a research interview conducted with a group who share a similar type of experience (Kelly 2009). In the study, the researcher set criteria for selecting student teachers using purposive sampling and identified student teachers who fit the criteria. Barbour (2008) points out that participants should know each other and be homogenous in terms of one factor (for example, they are studying to become teachers of literature) yet they also need to be different in terms of other factors such as race and gender so as to avoid a herd mentality. These two factors enabled the researcher to determine consensual views as well as atypical positions.

Kelly (2009) also notes that participants need to be informed about the focus group process, the content to be covered and the time required for the process. In the focus group of the study, student teachers first decided on the expectations and rules of engagement of the focus group. During the focus group interactions, the researcher had to be aware of the dynamics of the group including who was being marginalised, which topics were being avoided, and the concentration and comfort levels within the group. Sim (1998) cautions researchers to be aware that group dynamics can create an artificial impression of consensus and conformity which may result from participants being unable to offer nuances or express dissent, and thus remain with the views of the majority. Van Staveren (1997) urges researchers to give participants the opportunity to provide nuances, reinterpretations and challenges to the concepts being discussed. The researcher also needs to introduce the discussion in a way that encourages active participation. Following Kelly's (2009) suggestion that a focus group should use a semi-structured interview format, the researcher provided student teachers with a stimulus to initiate discussion following which they needed to focus on issues most important to them. The researcher had to decide when to focus the group on an issue relevant to the study and research questions and when to step back and allow the group to grapple with issues uppermost in their minds. The researcher had to listen for commonalities and differences in opinions, and had to get the student teachers to reflect with understanding on those commonalities and differences. As Barbour (2008) points out, while participants' individual experiences are revealed, the focus group also explores shared experiences and thus reaches collective rationalisations for their ideas and actions. Throughout the focus group interactions, the researcher took notes of the discussions and debates that emerged, and immediately the focus group disbanded, she undertook extensive reflection on the process and noted insights and understandings.

The focus group proved effective because a large amount of information was collected in a short space of time. The focus group helped in exploring student teachers' understandings of concepts and these understandings, in turn, informed subsequent developments of the study. While participants were not compelled to provide complete answers and thus possibly felt less intimidated by the process, they also had the freedom to explore issues in great depth through clarifications and divergent opinions. As Barbour (2008) notes, the focus group sets up an opportunity for an exchange of ideas among peers, but, as the focus group in the study proceeded, it became clear that the power dynamics between the researcher and focus group were uneven, as is often the case with focus groups (Goss and Leinbach 1996). Even though

participants accepted the concept of the focus group, the researcher prompted the process, chose participants, established the agenda, and framed the questions. The participants nonetheless verified the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Despite some limitations, the use of the focus groups is compatible with the ideals and principles of participatory action research, critical theory and a qualitative research approach. With the study's aim being to bring about change in the student teachers, the focus group helped to change the student teachers' consciousness, enabling them to access different information, explore innovative ways of thinking, and understand that they had a right to their opinions. They also understood that they had the power to act and the ability to grasp emancipation (Goss and Leinbach 1996; Barbour 2008).

### **3.8.3. Interviews**

Interviews were held with the student teachers after cycle three in the first year, after cycle six in the second year of the study (See Appendix J: Interview Schedule: Student teachers), and when student teachers who had been through the participatory action research cycles graduated and served as novice teachers (See Appendix K: Interview Schedule: Novice Teachers). The interviews began with an attempt to gain an understanding of each student teacher in terms of his/-her background and concerns. This helped in building up overall insight and understanding in relation to the sample of student teachers. Like the focus groups, a representative sample of interviewees, in terms of gender and race, was collected. Ten student teachers from the third-year class in the first year of the study and six student teachers from the fourth-year class in the second year of the study were interviewed, representing fifteen percent of each population.

The interviews were designed to investigate what strategies student teachers will use in their literature classrooms, determine student teachers' reactions to the interventions used in the lecture-rooms, and unpack student teachers' understandings of the concept 'change agent'. The researcher also interviewed four novice teachers who had been through the two years of the participatory action research cycles and subsequently graduated. The interviews sought to determine the extent to which the interventions of the study had any impact on the novice teachers.

Semi-structured or guided interviews were used in this study, where topics and issues were determined in advance, but the researcher decided on the order and wording during the course of the interview. While the semi-structured interviews followed a pre-planned set of

questions, the researcher had freedom and flexibility in choosing follow-up questions (Patton 1987; Cohen and Manion, 2000). Throughout the interviews, the researcher aimed to establish rapport and trust with the student teachers or novice teachers by listening attentively, responding empathetically to their responses and being reflexive about the process. Particular care was taken to maintain a balance between giving student or novice teachers sufficient time to answer questions and keeping the interviews focussed on the research questions. During the interviews, the researcher compiled notes to assist in the analysis of the interviews (Johnson and Christensen 2004).

The interviews were useful to the research process because they were personalised, provided in-depth information, and were casual and flexible, which permitted relatively free responses to questions and made it possible to probe information that would be difficult to obtain by using other forms of data collection such as observations (Seliger and Shohamy 1990; Johnson and Christensen 2004). However, the interviews and their subsequent analysis were time-consuming, and because the researcher was flexible with the questions, the validity of the process was reduced (Cohen and Manion, 2000). There were also instances when the researcher was not sure if the interviewees were trying to give what they considered to be socially correct answers or answers that would please the researcher, a problem that Stober (2001) identifies as the social desirability effect. Ultimately, the interviews were used to probe and confirm data gathered by means of other data collection methods and aid triangulation.

#### **3.8.4. Drawings**

Visual representations, in the form of drawings, were used at the end of cycle one in the first year of the study and at the end of cycle six in the second year of the study. In the first year, student teachers were presented with depictions of seven teachers and asked to engage with the drawings, describe and interpret them and then reflect on them by arguing for the depiction that best represented South African teachers. They also chose the depiction that best represented who they wanted to become and had to provide reasons for their choices (See Appendix L: Interpreting visual representations). In the second year, student teachers were asked to present a visual depiction of themselves as teachers of literature who were about to start teaching literature in school classrooms. They were also asked to explain their drawings (See Appendix M: Presenting visual representations).

During the data collection process, student teachers were assured that the focus of the activity was on the content of the drawings and not on the artistic ability of the student teachers. The

researcher also ensured that the drawings were not rushed and student teachers were allowed to draw at a leisurely pace and then write about their drawings in a considered manner (Mitchell et al. 2011). Ernst-daSilva's (2001, 4) statement that 'making a picture is a form of thinking' confirmed the researcher's belief that visual methods may be used as effective complementary strategies for collecting data.

Visual methods were used in the study for a variety of reasons. Firstly, visual methods are a recognised critical approach in intervention research (Mitchell et al. 2011). Secondly, this data collection strategy was a very useful means of inquiry to understand student teachers' grasp of the concepts under scrutiny in the study (Pink 2001; Flick 2002). Thirdly, they served as a method of representation where student teachers represented their emerging identities as teachers. Finally, the drawings served as a mode of transformation in that they became a means for enabling self-exploration, reflection and personal discovery (Ebersohn, Ferreira and Mbongwe 2011), and thereby facilitated student teachers' investigation into and discovery of their identities as teachers of literature and as agents of change.

Being asked to comment in writing on their drawings afforded student teachers a voice to explain what the drawings were attempting to convey (Mitchell et al. 2011). From a research perspective, the drawings actively involved student teachers in the research process, their drawings were visible proof of research findings, and were an easy means of data production and collection (Mitchell et al. 2011).

### **3.8.5. Film Study Questionnaires, Written work and Student evaluations**

At the end of the first cycle, the researcher recognised that she had very little information regarding student teachers' knowledge of film study, a section that was to be studied in cycle two. The researcher accordingly administered a short questionnaire to elicit information on student teachers' viewing histories, viewing preferences and exposure to films at school (See Appendix N: Questionnaire: Film study).

Throughout the participatory action research study, student teachers worked on written tasks based on the work done and interventions implemented. At the end of each cycle, student teachers evaluated both the module and the lecturer, according to university requirements (See Appendix O: Student evaluation). At the end of the study a more comprehensive student evaluation form was administered to student teachers to ascertain their final views on the effects of the study (See Appendix P: Final student evaluation). Both written tasks and student evaluations were used as data collection strategies and were analysed qualitatively to

determine the extent to which the study was making progress in enabling student teachers of literature to become agents of change in their classrooms.

### **3.9. Data analysis**

In qualitative research analysis, researchers reduce the data obtained to its basic essentials. The process involves skilled perceptions and systematic analysis from the researcher (and in this study, the student teachers as well) and is not a mechanical process (Seliger and Shohamy 1990). Researchers respect all participants' views, and there is a close investigation of details and a holistic view of the situation to discovering patterns, precedents, examples, themes, relationships and holistic features. The data is analysed by immersion in the details and specifics of the data, and results are generally particular to a situation, represent an insider viewpoint, and emerge from multiple perspectives (Patton 2002; Johnson and Christensen 2007).

By virtue of this study using a participatory action research design and a qualitative research approach, the researcher and student teachers had to work very closely together implementing the interventions and analysing the outcomes. The researcher decided that participating student teachers would engage with analysis only once all baseline information was collected, since questionnaire responses from practising teachers could have influenced student teachers' responses in their questionnaires. Once student teachers had responded to the questionnaires, student teachers and the researcher began their engagement with the data and shared in the analysis.

All data from questionnaires, observations, focus groups, interviews, drawing tasks and written work needed to be analysed by reading and segmenting data into meaningful analytic units that were coded. The codes used were both a priori (a set of codes developed before the data is examined) and inductive (the other codes developed by the researcher as the data is examined). For example, the research questions initially determined a priori codes, but as further data became available, other factors presented themselves (such as the characteristics of the emerging professional identity of student teachers), requiring further sets of codes to be developed.

As the analysis proceeded, the researcher was aware of investigator effects where researchers distort data because of their own personal biases or use certain data and leave out others to pursue a particular research agenda (Johnson and Christensen 2004). To alleviate investigator effects, all data was analysed and verified with persons involved in the research process. In

general, as soon as the first data was available, analysis was done, and then as additional data was obtained, different forms of data could be used for comparison (Tesch 1987 cited in Seliger and Shohamy 1989). Analysis was an ongoing, iterative process of collecting and analysing data (Johnson and Christensen 2007) until the researcher and student teachers had clear answers to the three research questions.

From the initial concept of the research to the final writing up of the thesis, all data, from observation field notes, interview and focus group field notes, questionnaires, drawings, student evaluations and written work, has been securely stored. Such data will be kept for five years before disposal, as per university rules. However, publications and conference papers that emanate from the data are in the public domain.

### **3.10. Reliability and validity**

While reliability refers to the consistency or stability of results, validity refers to the accuracy of the inferences or interpretations made from results. In the study, the researcher looked for consistency in the findings in at least three forms of data. Data collection required corroboration and validation of results during data collection, analysis and presentation of results (Johnson and Christensen 2007). In addition, participating student teachers served as co-analysers, monitors and verifiers of the research process.

The researcher and student teachers in the study also searched for data confirmations and substantiations that would reduce and even remove rival explanations. The study collected data over two years and three months, providing many opportunities to corroborate and verify findings. During the analysis, low inference descriptors were used, phrased very closely to student teachers' accounts, and verbatim evidence helped to authenticate findings (Johnson and Christensen 2007). The researcher and student teachers also had to identify factors not related to the study and thus not pertinent to the research questions, what Durrheim (2009) calls validity threats. Of even greater concern was attempting to identify rival hypotheses, causal factors other than those set out for study which could equally have produced the research results, thus casting doubt on their validity (Durrheim 2009).

In the study, triangulation allowed for corroboration and three forms of triangulation were brought into play. Firstly, data triangulation was used where multiple sources of data shed light on the phenomenon being studied. Secondly, methods triangulation was employed where a range of research methods (observations, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, drawings, written work and student evaluations) were brought to bear on the phenomenon.

Finally, there was also investigator triangulation where a number of investigators (researcher and student teachers) worked with the same data and student teachers' feedback to the interpretations enhanced triangulation (Durrheim 2009).

While participatory action research does not aim to be objective and impartial, it does aim for an authentic, credible, rigorous research process. Thus, the researcher needed integrity in communicating plans and reflecting on findings that emerged. Dick (1999) comments that participatory action research, by its very nature, gives added rigour to an enquiry. In this study, the spirals of cycles and action-positioned nature of the research ensured that data collection and interpretation coincided, and subsequent spirals of cycles were informed by the assessment and interpretations of data from previous cycles.

To ensure the validity of participatory action research, the suggestions made by Moser (1975) cited in Morrow and Torres (1995) were followed in this study. Firstly, the participatory action research process, functions and aims had to be transparent to all participating student teachers. Secondly, there needed to be compatibility between the aims and the methods used to achieve aims. Finally, the researcher needed to assert that she had an in-depth understanding of the situation and truthfully revealed all aspects of the research, including limitations, of which she had become aware.

### **3.11. Limitations**

The researcher recognised two main methodological limitations to the study. Firstly, the researcher and student teachers were aware that participatory action research involved *ad hoc* planning, not necessarily the norm in research studies. Participatory action research as a research design has also been criticised for lacking specific methodological practices and a rigid framework, and of unreliability in data-gathering (Waters-Adams 2006; van der Meulen 2011). The subjectivity of the researcher and student teachers and the relationships that emanate from the various processes make participatory action research significantly different from traditional objective research. The researcher and the student teachers worked together as research partners and responsibility for the process was shared. However, throughout the study, the researcher and student teachers reflected upon the process as ethical issues emerged, they negotiated, planned and implemented new cycles of research as carefully as possible, and they theorised all findings to enable reliable access to practice.

A second limitation focussed on the validity of the participatory action research process, by evaluating the role of the researcher. The researcher has to be socially responsive, empathetic

and reflexive at all stages of the research. The researcher served as the primary facilitator of the study and as the students teachers' lecturer and assessor. She therefore could wield power within the research process and could arrive with biases related to the research process (Waters-Adams 2006). The researcher and the student teachers grappled with Reid's (2000, 169) action research study where it was found that, despite aiming for equality and inclusivity, Reid realised that 'power imbalances were often enforced and that the research site often inhibited a truly collaborative research environment'. There, therefore, had to be clear mediation of the research process and a seamless integration of the various roles played by the researcher. To ameliorate power imbalances, the researcher attempted to empower herself with knowledge about participatory action research and to actively enable inclusion and active involvement of the student teachers in the data analysis and data verification. Reflection was undertaken daily by the researcher to determine the ethical implications that emanated from the inherent power over the student teachers. Perhaps the most crucial aspect of the study as a whole involved the dialogical relationship between the researcher and student teachers which included collaborative critical reflection and shared planning and facilitation. At these times, the ethical implications of the research process and research relationship were interrogated. The researcher, thus, had to be critically aware of the power dynamics of her role, and had to factor in those dynamics when working with the student teachers in the design and development of the study.

### **3.12. Conclusion**

The critical, participatory nature of the study resonated with a participatory action research design and a qualitative research approach. A variety of data collection strategies and multiple data analysts enabled triangulation, and the reliability and validity of the findings.

## **CHAPTER 4: BASELINE INFORMATION**

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### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides the baseline information that informed the rest of the participatory action research study. In participatory action research, knowing how research participants

respond or perform before the beginning of the study provides a foundation for comparing study results. Thus, the baseline information has to be ascertained before any interventions are implemented and has to provide information about student teachers' perceptions and experiences.

However, together with collecting baseline information about the student teachers in the study, baseline information was also collected from practising teachers. After analysing the teachers' and the student teachers' views, the views of the two groups were compared to determine if student teachers and practising teachers have similar or divergent views surrounding the teaching of literature. Analyses and reflections on the baseline information enabled student teachers and the researcher to set the participatory action research process in motion.

## **4.2. Ascertaining views of practising teachers**

### **4.2.1. Practising teachers' profiles**

The twenty-two teachers who answered the questionnaire comprised the entire class of a Bachelor of Education Honours module specialising in Language and Media Education. The researcher had access to them as she taught them and thus they served as a convenient sample. The teachers had either undergraduate Education or Arts degrees with a postgraduate diploma in education, and they taught English as a home language or first additional language. The fact that the teachers had degrees pointed to the fact that they were possibly more highly qualified than many of their colleagues as many South African teachers are unqualified or under-qualified (CDE 2011; Jansen 2011; Vavi 2011). In addition, the fact that they were studying further indicated that they aspired to improve, either in terms of their knowledge or in their quests to gain materially, for example, get a promotion.

In terms of gender, age, and level that they have taught, teachers ranged as follows:

Gender	Number
Female	14
Male	8

Age	Number
20+	6
30+	10
40+	5
50+	1

High school teachers	Primary school teachers
12	10

**Gender, age and level: Practising teachers: Table C**

Their schools were located in the following areas, as defined by the teachers:

Rural	Semi-rural	Urban, working class	Urban, well-resourced
7	2	12	1

**Location of schools: Practising teachers: Table D**

Teachers who answered the questionnaire represented both high and primary school teachers who ranged in ages from being in their twenties to a teacher being over fifty years of age, and the majority of them were female. While the majority of the teachers worked in urban, working-class schools, there was a fair representation from rural and semi-rural schools. Urban, well-resourced schools were under-represented in this sample.

#### **4.2.2. Questionnaires to practising teachers: Findings and interpretations**

The questionnaire to practising teachers had both discrete and open-ended questions (See Appendix E). Discrete questions were usually followed by questions that required explanations. The results of the discrete questions are presented in the table below and discussed thereafter.

QUESTION	YES	NO	YES & NO	BLANK
5. Do you believe that teachers of literature are able to equip learners to grow and develop through the study of literature in their school classrooms?	20		2	

6. Did your lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature?	20	2		
7. Do you believe that lecturers of literature are able to equip student teachers to effect changes in their learners and help their school learners grow?	21		1	
8. Did your lecturers of literature equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your school learners grow?	20	1	1	
10. Do you believe that you are an agent of change in your school classroom?	21			1
11. Do you believe that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change in the school classroom?	21			1
12. Is there a teacher at your school that you consider an agent of change?	22			

**Questionnaires to practising teachers: Answers to discrete questions: Table E**

Answers to the discrete questions revealed that the majority of teacher respondents believed that:

- teachers of literature were able to equip learners to grow and develop through the study of literature in their school classrooms (Question 5)
- teachers of literature were able to serve as agents of change (Question 11)
- lecturers of literature were able to equip student teachers to effect changes in their learners and helped their learners grow (Question 7)
- their lecturers equipped them to become effective teachers of literature (Question 6)
- their lecturers equipped them to effect changes in their learners (Question 8)

Twenty-one of the twenty-two respondents considered themselves agents of change in their classrooms (Question 10) and all respondents indicated that there was a teacher at their schools who might be considered an agent of change (Question 12).

This data points to the fact that there is a general belief among respondents that teachers can use literature to help learners grow and develop and that teachers of literature can serve as agents of change. There is also a wide-ranging idea among respondents that lecturers of literature can make a difference to student teachers' ability to grow and develop their learners, and that the majority believe that their lecturers have enabled them to become effective teachers of literature who are able to help learners grow. The fact that two respondents answered YES and NO to Question 5, and one respondent answered YES and NO to Questions 7 and 8 points to a possible limitation of the questionnaire since respondents had not been asked to expand their answers to these discrete questions. However, they were provided with opportunities to expand their responses in other questions. The fact that two respondents chose to leave questions relating to change agents blank indicates the possibility

that they were not sure of the definitions of the terms. There were, however, opportunities to unpack concepts in the open-ended questions.

The first open-ended question on the questionnaire is question 3 (What is your idea of an effective teacher of literature?). The most repeated response was that teachers of literature needed to be well prepared by reading the text and researching background information. Another repeated response was that teachers needed to engage learners in the lesson by using a 'variety of strategies' including 'experiential learning' to 'make literature as concrete and visual as possible'. Respondents believed that a teacher should allow literature to 'come alive', and lessons needed to be fun, exciting, stimulating and enjoyable. Teacher respondents recognised the need for teachers to be prepared and to engage learners in the lesson. Responses indicate teachers' clear understanding of how classrooms work. If a teacher is not prepared, the lesson will fail; if teachers cannot motivate learners, arouse interest and involve learners in the lesson, learners will not participate. Responses indicate that teacher respondents are probably providing answers from a place of knowledge in how effective classrooms work.

Respondents also noted that teachers of literature needed to be 'vibrant', and 'interesting', needed to use voices effectively, and ought not to use the 'jug-mug approach'. In other words, teachers need to use active means to engage learners and therefore cannot merely feed information to learners. Suggestions on how to engage learners included asking questions, applying the text to learners' lives, comparing the text to 'life situations', showing learners the relevance of the text, and using the text 'to make a mark on learners' lives'. To implement such suggestions would mean teachers having an extremely thorough knowledge of the text. Two teachers noted that an effective teacher taught 'at learners' level of understanding', and used 'simple language to aid understanding'. To achieve engagement and understanding, teachers have to 'be aware of and use learners' backgrounds'. Thus, besides knowing the text well, teachers have to know their learners' historical, cultural and social contexts just as well and have to adapt their teaching to suit their learners' levels of understanding, language competencies, and backgrounds. While some of this information might be available from learners' files, information gleaned from classroom discussions may help teachers understand their learners as well.

Another common theme that ran through responses was that teachers needed to have 'passion for the text'; make learners 'passionate about the text'; and create 'a positive attitude towards

literature’. Such a teacher enabled learners to ‘voice opinions’; ‘liked being challenged by learners’ opinions’; and ‘allowed learners to become critical thinkers’. While the attributes are commendable ones, the last characteristic – ‘allowed learners to become critical thinkers’ – seems to imply that the teacher gives permission or authorisation for critical thinking, the antithesis of enabling critical thinking. Such a teacher appears to embrace critical thinking but seems to be unwilling to relinquish control of what is thought and how the thought is articulated. According to respondents, an effective teacher was also well-read, aware of current affairs, and able to share knowledge of current happenings with learners. In addition, the teacher was able to reflect on lessons and encouraged learners to reflect on what they read. Thus, teacher respondents indicate a need for teachers of literature to read widely and to enable reflection of the teaching and learning process.

On a more practical note, a respondent noted that effective teachers provided learners with the ‘skills to decode literature on their own if need be’, indicating that learners would move towards independence in their ability to analyse literature. In contrast, another respondent believed that a teacher should ‘unpack the literature for learners’, indicating that the teacher’s opinions and reactions to the text would inform learners’ opinions and reactions. An effective teacher is also ‘able to adapt lessons’ and did not ‘stick rigidly to a lesson plan’, implying that teachers need to be flexible in their teaching approaches and respond to situations in the classroom as they arise.

The following four responses were not repeated comments. One teacher noted that teachers ‘must be able to tackle sensitive social issues through literature to educate learners’. Another pointed out that teachers need to ‘use literature for productive life skills’, and a third respondent indicated that a ‘teacher of literature must be influential to make a difference in learners’ lives’. A fourth comment was that teachers should ‘reach out and help learners if they have problems with the text’. While each of the four comments is a solitary one, they point to four teacher respondents who highlight the ability of teachers of literature to use literary texts to make a difference to learners’ lives.

In response to question 4 (What is your idea of an ineffective teacher of literature?), responses are categorised into four themes: lack of preparedness; lack of engagement; poor teaching strategies; personal attributes. Respondents identified ineffective teachers as those who were not prepared and had not embarked on any research in their preparations, with one respondent explaining the lack of preparedness with an example of a teacher who ‘walked into the

classroom and then decided to teach an aspect of literature'. On the one hand, such a teacher may confuse learners who may be prepared for a certain section of the English syllabus but are faced with a lesson on literature. On the other hand, such a teacher may be responding to an event or question from a previous lesson or day that has prompted the lesson and feels confident enough to teach it even without preparation. Another response identified ineffective teachers as those who are 'not prepared to ask for help'. The response assumes that the teacher needs help or needs to believe that s/he needs help.

Ineffective teachers were seen to lack engagement with learners, had 'not worked out how to get through to learners' and 'could not pitch the lesson at the level of all learners'. Repeated responses were that ineffective teachers 'told rather than engaged'; did not enable learner participation and interaction; and 'did not listen to and appreciate learners' ideas'. Thus, such teachers use what Freire (1970) called banking education where the teacher deposits information into learners, a one-way process. The teacher 'did all the work for learners'; asked 'no probing questions'; and learners were 'not given the opportunity to be critical thinkers and to challenge the teacher'. The views of the teacher respondents concur with those of Bonwell and Eison (1991) who have shown that teachers cannot be effective and engaged when they adopt just one method of teaching where the teacher talks and the learners listen. Thus, democratic participation, learner agency and voice in such classrooms fails to materialise and possibilities for change become very difficult.

Further, teacher respondents believed that an ineffective teacher of literature 'is incapable of helping learners make sense of literature' and did not link the literature to learners' backgrounds. Such a teacher also did not 'engage fully' with the text, did not develop 'learners' critical thinking skills', and did not 'ask higher order questions' or 'questions of a critical nature'. Lack of engagement was further identified by the teacher not creating 'space for learners to reflect on the literature and on their learning'. Responses thus indicate that teacher respondents understand ineffective teachers to lack skills in engagement and critical reflection.

Furthermore, the ineffective teacher used teaching strategies that lacked creativity, and were 'unstimulating'. Such teachers could not teach in a fun, exciting way, used only one method of teaching (usually 'rote-learning'), and presented lessons in a monotonous voice. The ineffective teachers did not make literature 'entertaining'; 'interesting'; or 'enjoyable'; and 'a literature lesson = the teacher reading' with 'no analysis or interpretation'; 'teaching by the

book and not beyond'; and infrequent assessment of learners. In such classes, learners did not understand literature and believed it was 'beyond them'. Respondents thus indicate that an ineffective teacher provides boring lessons and fails to involve learners in the teaching and learning process. Such a teacher works against Freire's (1970) belief that teachers and learners should be actively engaged in the process of constructing meaning.

When describing ineffective teachers of literature, respondents pointed to certain personal qualities. Respondents believed that ineffective teachers had no passion for the subject and text, and learners, in turn, imbibed the teacher's lack of passion. Such teachers could not understand aspects of the text and were generally unsure of teaching literature. It is possible that such teachers are unqualified or under-qualified to teach literature, as is the case in many South African classrooms (National Planning Commission 2008). One respondent indicated that ineffective teachers of literature believed that 'literature was free time' and 'used literature time for other subjects'. If literature time is 'free time' and is used 'for other subjects', one wonders how learners in such classes cope with tests and examinations which assess aspects of literature. Respondents also believed that ineffective teachers were poor readers and did not like reading. If teachers do not like reading, it is unlikely that they will encourage learners to engage in reading as a pleasurable activity. Such learners are thus being treated unjustly by denying them a complete experience of the English curriculum. Finally, respondents noted that ineffective teachers were 'not interested in their learners'. If teachers are 'not interested in their learners', they will equally lack interest in growing learners or helping them transform. This study is focussed on enabling student teachers to become agents of change by growing their learners and helping them transform.

In this study, the researcher, while fulfilling many roles, also serves as the student teachers' lecturer. Therefore, it is important to ascertain the perceptions and experiences of teachers who have been through teacher education programmes to glean their assessments of their lecturers who prepared them to become teachers of literature. Thus, teachers were asked if their lecturers of literature equipped them to become effective teachers of literature (Question 6.1) and the majority of respondents answered in the affirmative. The open-ended answers in the affirmative pointed to lecturers providing 'theoretical tools'; 'different literary genres'; 'skills'; 'methods'; and 'different approaches to teaching literature in a fun and enjoyable way'. Respondents highlighted being shown how to use aids to enhance lessons, being exposed to the effectiveness of group-work, and being shown 'how to make lessons stimulating and exciting'. A respondent noted, 'My lecturers' lectures engaged me. I try to do

the same in my classes'. Other respondents pointed to being 'taught how to be sensitive to second language learners' challenges'; being 'shown how to use the voice, body, gestures and eye contact effectively to enhance communication'; and 'creating a classroom that is conducive to learning'. Thus, the respondents indicate that lecturers of literature have given them strategies to become effective engaged teachers of literature. However, one has to be aware that most respondents have had just one experience of how lectures should proceed and thus their terms of reference are limited. However, it is equally possible that respondents have had excellent lecturers who have been successful in providing effective strategies that respondents have taken into their classrooms.

Another repeated response was that lecturers of literature introduced concepts of 'critical awareness' and 'critical engagement with texts' to respondents. Respondents noted that they discovered methods of asking questions and learnt how to use literary theories to analyse texts, 'draw from learners' background knowledge', and relate texts to learners' lives. A respondent pointed out that they 'were taught different ways to interrogate the text, to ask questions, and not to accept issues at face value.' Another indicated that lecturers 'allowed us to question'; 'discussed possible answers and interpretations'; and 'were not dogmatic in their interpretations'. Thus teachers have indicated that their lecturers taught them important skills. Whether the teachers used the same strategies in their own classrooms or not is not spelt out.

A respondent noted the impact of his/-her literature lectures by noting, 'When I came to university I knew nothing about literature. As a learner in my school I learnt about the structure of the novel. I had no idea about anything. I couldn't relate it to anything. I didn't even know what a theme was. At our schools (African) they fool around with literature. I learnt it all including literary theories at university'. The respondent did not mention a particular school but referred to 'our schools (African)', implying a knowledge of many similar schools. His/-her representation of literature classes seems to imply that not much literature is taught or that it is taught in an ineffective way. The respondent's perception of African schools had to be addressed in the study where other student teachers might have had similar experiences with literature. If the situation is as the respondent indicates, it is thus a perception that has to be confronted to break the cycle of replication.

Finally, respondents indicated that their lecturers served as role models. Comments indicated that their lecturers 'displayed a culture of reading' and 'we learnt to read for enjoyment'. Respondents pointed out that they had tried to emulate their lecturers' actions, and teaching

and learning ethos. A respondent summed up his/-her response to the question by stating, ‘I admired my lecturer because she was always so prepared, her entire lecture was well planned, she assessed our knowledge throughout the lecture, and she gave such positive feedback. The whole atmosphere was cool. I use her as my yardstick. There were useless ones too – I knew I didn’t want to be like them’. This comment indicates that lecturers are seen as potential role models to students and thus have a responsibility to present themselves as possible models to emulate. However, the final statement ‘There were useless ones too – I knew I didn’t want to be like them’ indicates that students are able to recognise what they do not want to emulate, an equally positive display of agency and transformative possibilities.

In response to Question 8 (Did your lecturers of literature equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your learners grow?), the majority of respondents indicated that their lecturers equipped them to effect changes in their learners and help their learners to grow. However, one respondent disagreed noting, ‘Basically, we went through a novel and did a critical analysis as an assignment. No creative methods to teach literature’, indicating dissatisfaction with the way literature was taught. Another respondent explained, ‘Lecturers can give ideas and methods but in the end, teachers have to help learners to grow. The teacher has to make the effort’, indicating that the respondent is aware that teachers have to recognise the power and control vested in them.

Those who answered in the affirmative highlighted aspects learnt from lecturers. Those aspects included literary analysis, literary theories, narrative structure, introducing a text, reading and writing with understanding, and teaching so that learners realised that there was ‘more than one way of looking at a text’. The aspects cited enable effective understanding of literary texts but are not necessarily strategies to effect changes and help learners grow. However, respondents noted that lecturers showed them how to help their learners to grow by allowing them to ‘draw their own conclusions’; equipping them with the ability to ‘link content to learners’ lives and experiences’; and teaching them that ‘learners bring a lot to a literature lesson’. A respondent noted that his/-her lecturer had ‘taught me to appreciate and enjoy reading, and now my learners enjoy it; my lecturer taught me to enjoy the language, and my learners, who previously thought English was insignificant to their lives, now enjoy the language’. The final respondent’s words indicate a perception that the university lecturer’s words and actions impacted on and still resonate in the respondent’s school classroom.

Other responses included the idea that lecturers encouraged discussion and debate ‘as long as individual rights were respected’. Lecturers were perceived to teach students how to be creative, patient, non-judgemental, respectful of all views, and ‘how to empathise with characters. My learners do this now. This is a good skill which will help them grow’. A respondent noted that ‘the manner in which knowledge was imparted helped me to grow. I try to help my learners grow intellectually, morally and spiritually’. Others note that lecturers encouraged them to ‘make school an enjoyable place’. Respondents also pointed out that lecturers equipped them to help learners grow by pointing out the ‘hidden curriculum’ in schools, and ‘that is why I always ask, why? How did you come to that conclusion?’ Others noted that lecturers exposed them to many viewpoints and ‘my opinions changed often as I thought about things. I want my learners to go through that too’. Finally, a respondent noted that an extremely useful discussion led by a lecturer shaped his/-her thoughts when the lecturer asked the question, ‘who is a good or bad teacher – I was challenged to think really critically that day’. Thus, respondents acknowledge their lecturers’ roles in equipping them to effect changes and help learners to grow.

Teachers also answered question 9 (Teachers can serve as agents of change in the school classroom. What do you understand ‘agents of change’ to mean?). The most common themes to emerge included changed mind-sets, teaching strategies, and role models. Eight respondents used the word ‘mind-set’ in their responses and some noted that an agent of change was able to change or alter learners’ mind-sets and make a positive difference to the school. The responses imply that there is something – the mind-set - that should change. Further, agents of change were ‘dynamic people who were able to influence others around them to win their respect and trust’ and they ‘taught learners about life and daily situations and could actively change the way children think about things around them’. A respondent recognised an agent of change as someone who was ‘an expert or had knowledge in doing something and who could come up with strategies to bring about change’. Such teachers ‘respected learners and saw the good in them’ and learners, in turn, respected and trusted those teachers. They ‘asked questions that could bring about change in learners’ lives’ and they ‘allowed for growth in the learner, the class and even the school’. These teachers also ‘transformed learners by giving them more information’ and they ‘brought confidence to children, showed consideration and were sensitive to children’s abilities’. According to respondents, change agents also ‘helped make learners critical thinkers’ and got learners to ‘think out of the box’. Overall, respondents’ conceptions of a change agent indicate the

transformative possibilities entrusted to a teacher who ultimately acts in a way that learners can trust and even emulate.

Some respondents related the concept of the change agent to a teacher of literature. They noted that the teacher was able to bring about a difference to learners by moving learners from ‘poor participation in literature lessons to an improved one’; could ‘bring about a change from a negative attitude to literature to a positive attitude’; and could make learners see ‘the importance of learning literature’. The respondents’ comments indicate that learners do not participate actively in literature lessons, they do not like literature lessons, and do not recognise the role that literary texts can play. Further, some respondents equated an agent of change with an innovative teacher and noted that those ‘dynamic teachers’ used innovative teaching strategies such as ‘role-play and dramatisation’ in their classes. While such teachers might be effective, engaging teachers, they are not necessarily agents of change.

However, there are three conceptions of change agents that deviate from the group. One respondent believed that a change agent ‘was able to show learners why it was important for them to understand something in a particular way’, and another noted that a change agent ‘changed learners’ ways of doing and thinking’. A third respondent pronounced that, ‘a teacher is like a parent to the learners who spend most of their time with the teacher. Therefore, a teacher is in a position to indoctrinate learners with values and life lessons. So a teacher needs to be a role model to help cure the ills of society’. Such comments indicate that respondents are reinforcing hegemonic practices and prefer keeping established traditional practices in place. There is also the understanding by a respondent that learners’ ways of ‘doing and thinking’ need changing. While the final respondent clearly understands the *in locus parentis* role of teachers, the respondent wants the teacher to ‘cure the ills of society’ and even though those ‘ills’ are not spelt out, it is difficult to imagine how a teacher would go about implementing this role.

Questions 10, 11 and 12 (Do you believe that you are an agent of change in your school classroom? Do you believe that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change in the school classroom? Is there a teacher at your school that you consider an agent of change?) had the majority of respondents answering in the affirmative. With question 10 (Do you believe that you are an agent of change in your school classroom?), one respondent chose not to answer and one respondent explained his/-her answer, despite the answer requiring a YES or NO response. The respondent noted, ‘I can talk to my children and enjoy the mesmerised

looks on their faces as they listen to me speak'. While it is commendable that the teacher recognises the learners as 'my children', there is no further explanation of why the 'mesmerised looks' point to the teacher being an agent of change or what the 'mesmerised looks' signify.

Similarly, with question 11 (Do you believe that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change in the school classroom?), one respondent chose not to answer and one respondent explained his/-her answer, despite the answer requiring a YES or NO response. The respondent explained, 'Teachers of literature are in a position to impose their views on learners in a subtle way'. The respondent has defined an agent of change as someone who inflicts his/-her views on learners, and does it in what appears to be a devious manner. While the majority of respondents answered in the affirmative to question 12 (Is there a teacher at your school that you consider an agent of change?), one chose not to answer and five respondents identified a lecturer at university, not a teacher at school, as an agent of change.

The open-ended responses to question 12.1 (Is there a teacher at your school that you consider to be an agent of change? If yes, say what makes you consider the person to be an agent of change. If No, say why you think this is so) identified certain characteristics defining agents of change. Three respondents pointed to agents of change using innovative teaching strategies such as 'learner centred methods'; the use of 'pictures and articles'; and 'rewarding learners by allowing them to read for pleasure'. As noted earlier, innovation alone does not necessarily make a teacher an agent of change. Others pointed out personal attributes of agents of change who respondents recognised as being understanding, positive, respectful of learners, dynamic, open-minded, and flexible, and who 'always consulted with and assisted colleagues'. The personal attributes, as indicated by respondents, may be indicators of teachers who make a difference to the lives of their learners. Thus, their manners and dispositions are recognised as possible approaches towards effecting change.

In addition, respondents were able to identify teachers who transformed the lives of their learners. Respondents identified persons who 'made an impact on learners' lives'; 'showed learners the right way'; 'went beyond the call of duty'; and 'taught life-skills in every lesson'. One agent of change was described as someone who 'had been able to secure learners' respect and learners were active and enthusiastic in her classes'. A further example was the teacher working in a 'poor socio-economic area. Her learners were affirmed, and were treated fairly and with respect. Each child's home background was known and catered for'. Yet another

‘never undermined learners’ ideas. He got excited about new ideas. He actively engaged learners and allowed them to convince him why they thought differently to him’. All examples cited above indicate change agents who make a difference to learners’ lives by aiming for democratic participation, giving learners voice, and recognising and affirming learners’ historical, social and cultural contexts.

Three respondents highlighted the issues of morals and values in change agents. Comments indicated that ‘evidence of the morals and values she imparts is visible, even after the lesson’; ‘she has changed learners’ attitudes so that they now understand and accept diversity of cultures and their self-esteem has been enhanced’; and ‘she has strong moral values and learners look up to her’. The change agents’ learners and peers recognise such teachers not just as positive role models, but their impact seems to proceed beyond their immediate classrooms. In addition, teachers were identified as agents of change because of their pastoral care of learners. One teacher ‘made such a difference to learners’ lives. They look up to her and love her. She has influenced them so strongly and she obviously loves them’. Another teacher ‘helped learners with their problems, usually not academic ones. Learners come to her for help and feel comfortable confiding in her. She does what is in their best interests and never betrays their trust’. While it is commendable that these teachers make a difference to their learners’ lives, one wonders whether teachers are equipped to handle all social issues and whether they have the time to do it. However, it is fortunate for the learners that they have such teachers as government schools have now dispensed with state paid school counsellors. Ultimately, a respondent summed up a teacher’s role as an agent of change by noting, ‘Most teachers are agents of change. Our present curriculum allows for growth. Teachers must encourage curious minds. A curious mind – growth, development. We have to make them curious’. The respondent indicates an understanding that teachers, together with the curriculum, are able to, and do, serve as agents of change. In addition, the respondent recognises the need for teachers to inspire and nurture inquiring minds.

Five respondents identified their university lecturers as agents of change. Three respondents noted that specific lecturers ‘helped me see the bigger picture and made me aware of important issues that I never knew existed’; ‘broadened my thoughts and feelings about being a teacher’; and ‘demanded critical thinking, yet was always willing to help’. Two respondents provided details of their university lecturers. They explained that ‘two lecturers engaged us in readings and helped us grow intellectually and in other ways. We enjoyed the experience of being with them’; and ‘she had a positive influence on me as a reader and thinker. She made

an impact on my life. She didn't just talk – she showed us that you are only as good as you do'. It is significant that despite not being given the choice of teacher or lecturer, five respondents chose independently to discuss a lecturer. It is possible that there are no examples of change agents in their schools, the university lecturers made a significant impact on their ways of teaching and learning, or other reasons that are known to them. However, their responses indicate that the respondents recognised the issues of transformation, empowerment, critique, active engagement, growth and the importance of positive role-models as being important to their development as teachers.

#### **4.2.3. Narrative research with practising teachers: Findings and interpretations**

The researcher believed that the research with practising teachers had to be extended to gain a more complete picture of how practising teachers of literature understood and experienced the various concepts being considered and the research questions being asked. Thus, once the questionnaires were collected and responses analysed, narrative research was undertaken.

For this part of the research, twenty-two teacher-researchers (who had previously filled in the questionnaire) conducted narrative research by choosing one or more of the following questions: What does it mean to teach literature to learners? How do teachers of literature become better teachers of literature? How do teachers of literature help their learners grow? How can teachers of literature serve as agents of change in the classroom? They were asked to interview teachers using the questions as starting points, and were then to write up their research reports based on their findings.

The sample of interviewees included eighteen female and four male teachers. There were eleven African teachers, eight Indian teachers, two Coloured teachers and one White teacher. Twelve teachers were from high schools and ten from primary schools. Their teaching experiences ranged from one year to thirty-two years. Thirteen teachers had teachers' diplomas, six had university degrees and teachers' diplomas, one teacher had an Honours degree and one teacher had a Masters degree. One teacher did not have a tertiary qualification but was working towards a degree.

It was interesting to note that of the twenty-two teachers interviewed, nineteen were considered 'good' teachers of literature by the teacher-researchers who were the interviewees' colleagues. At no time, in the planning of the research, were teacher-researchers asked to interview 'good' teachers, nor did teacher-researchers indicate that they would interview colleagues whom they considered to be 'good' teachers of English. On completion of the

research, reasons for teacher-researchers' choice of 'good' teachers became apparent.

Comments such as, 'We all know about the useless teachers. I wanted to choose someone that I know is good'; 'I tried asking a colleague that I work with. He said he was too busy. I know he's just lazy'; and 'I decided to ask a teacher that the children loved' emerged.

Thus, the data from the narrative research was largely based on the perceptions and experiences of twenty teachers who were considered effective by their peers. The two other teachers who were chosen represent views quite different from the majority but could represent a group of teachers in many schools, and thus their views have been considered. Further, in retrospect, having access to the views of teachers who are considered to be effective teachers of literature, could prove an important means of deciding how to proceed with the process of student teachers of literature becoming agents of change.

In response to the first question (What does it mean to teach literature to learners?), a teacher of literature revealed that she did not enjoy teaching literature, she did not like reading novels, and she read magazines when she had time. She noted that her second language learners were often bored and tired, and got poor marks for their efforts. Another teacher shared, 'My learners don't like reading, they can't read and they don't read. The literature lesson is dreaded at school'. Her reasons included learners not knowing the vocabulary in stories, not being able to relate to issues in the story, finding the length of the books intimidating, needing to share books and not being able to take books home. This teacher, like the previous one, indicated that she did not enjoy reading and she did not have time for reading. Of the twenty-two teachers, these two indicated negativity around the literature lesson. One indicated that she did not enjoy teaching literature while the other noted that her learners did not enjoy literature. As both teachers did not enjoy reading themselves, it was possible that they were unable to motivate and encourage their learners to read. Further, the learners in both teachers' classes did badly in their efforts to read, possibly because their teachers could not nurture and inspire them.

Other teachers, however, saw things differently. An interviewee remarked, 'To me, teaching literature means engaging learners in various social worlds through different genres of literature'. This interviewee went on to note that a study of literature prepared learners for the outside world by learning from the experiences of others, it helped in language development which in turn helped in social interaction, and it afforded learners the opportunity to learn about the norms and customs of different societies. This helped to foster respect for and

acceptance of different peoples. These views reinforce those of Savvidou (2004) whose study found that the teaching of literature allowed learners to broaden their understanding of different worlds and provided a vehicle to reinforce lexical and grammatical structures. Another teacher summed up her feelings: ‘To teach literature to students, I have to prepare, research and move away from pre-conceived ideas of what good literature is. My learners don’t like old literature, they want modern stories and yet they love fables and legends with morals. I decided that together with my learners we have to take ownership of the literature and we explore literature in a way that benefits them’. This teacher was reflecting her recognition that she had to work with learners and their preferences if she was to succeed in her classes. The teacher also revealed her willingness to encourage democratic participation of learners.

Other teachers saw teaching literature in terms of what the lesson should include and noted that the literature lesson needed to incorporate reading, writing, thinking, reasoning, speaking, listening, and correct language usage. Others focussed on the teacher and emphasised the need for the teacher to be enthusiastic, creative and, as one interviewee noted, ‘have a good command of the language’. A teacher summed up her idea of what it meant to teach literature to learners by stating, ‘When teaching literature, I aim to teach children to be reflective, thoughtful, responsible, active human beings, and for that, preparation is vital’. These words remind us of Hattie’s (2003) findings that good teachers had mastery over their subject matter and influenced learners’ outcomes of learning.

In response to the question, how do teachers of literature become better teachers of literature, one teacher summarised her frustrations thus, ‘There is not much I can do here because of overcrowding. I teach in the traditional way, the same way that I was taught. I read to them, and then they answer questions on their own. I can’t have discussions and questions and answers’. The teacher did acknowledge that her lessons were not interesting and that learners ‘hated’ it. However, she noted, ‘I don’t have the energy to improve learners’ performance since I have a heavy-duty load’. This teacher’s response focuses on legitimate concerns of South African teachers – overcrowding and high workloads. However, she was also reflecting Lortie’s (1975) contention that teachers usually teach as they were taught. Of concern was the finding that, despite knowing that lessons were despised by learners and were boring, the teacher believed that she could not make changes. This interviewee, an experienced teacher, requested a follow-up interview from the teacher-researcher, an inexperienced teacher. At the second interview, the teacher indicated that she had thought about her responses and knew

that she had to change. This was a very positive indicator of the need for change. She even stated that she wanted support in the form of a mentor to guide her and indicated that she was keen to study further. When pushed for a commitment, however, she emphasised that she would not study at that point as she was too stressed.

Another teacher stated upfront that she did not like reading and disliked teaching literature. She initially blamed her learners for her uninspiring lessons. She later listed a range of what she termed 'boring activities' that she used and acknowledged that she was to blame for her learners being unresponsive and fatigued in her classes and for receiving poor marks in tests and examinations. Like other teachers who were interviewed, she noted that she taught as she was taught in school, a finding that is backed up by many studies all over the world (Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Knowles 1992; Furlong and Maynard 1995; Carter and Anders 1996; Carter and Doyle 1996; Griffiths 2000). At her interview, she was able to identify innovative, creative ways of teaching literature but said that she had not yet tried them. Interestingly, this teacher also asked to meet with the teacher-researcher a week later and explained that she realised how she was failing her learners. Her words, 'I try not to teach in that boring way anymore' was a positive sign that there was the possibility for change. It appeared that the two teachers who requested follow-up interviews needed to put right the perceptions of the teacher-researchers, their colleagues. Teachers meet their colleagues on a daily basis and it is possible that projecting the correct image is important. The fact that both teachers recognised their failings indicated their ability to reflect on their practices and the fact that one teacher was trying 'not to teach in that boring way anymore' pointed to the ability to act on change. An additional important point to recognise was that the teacher-researchers' questions had prompted introspection and reflection, and thus was a possible means by which all teachers could reflect on their teaching practices.

A teacher noted that while learners could pronounce words, they had no understanding of the words they were reading. She explained, 'It's more than a language issue. They have no understanding of the concepts and issues in the stories'. This teacher pointed out that there were very few books at her school, but that she borrowed and bought books and carried them with her in the bus to school. Many other teachers also brought books, newspapers, comics and magazines to class to encourage their learners to read.

Many teachers were also passionate about their ideas on how they became better teachers of literature. Several teachers cited using drama strategies, poetry, group activities, debates and

storytelling in their lessons. They focussed on contemporary issues that would resonate with their learners. Of the teachers that said they enjoyed teaching literature, all noted that they loved reading and read novels and newspapers, and three teachers subscribed to magazines. One teacher teaching in an impoverished area with multiple socio-economic problems noted that she just wanted to inspire her learners to read. She pointed out that she told her class of eighty learners that reading was one way out of their problems. She read stories, poetry and plays to them, she accessed stories that learners could relate to, and she helped learners relate to stories that were beyond their understanding. She also reminded learners that poetry was an essential part of their rich African culture and featured in African ceremonies. She encouraged performance of plays and stories being studied, because learners enjoyed them. She also imitated formats used on television, such as talk shows, she used pictures to help them visualise events and characters, and she used predictive exercises that her learners responded to enthusiastically. As she noted, ‘Sometimes - the chaos! But they love it and they want to know more!’ Interestingly, this teacher noted that as a learner, her school principal was her English teacher. As she put it, ‘All he did was read and read. We could sleep or even walk out and he wouldn’t know’. She decided that she was never going to repeat that method. She encapsulated her thoughts with, ‘Black people do not read. We need to break that culture. I want to do justice in my classroom’. This teacher went against Lortie’s apprenticeship of observation (which indicates that teachers teach as they were taught) by identifying a teacher who represented everything she did not want to become. She also declared her intention not to replicate what she recognised as a cycle of injustice.

Another teacher stressed the need for a happy, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. He used jokes as ice-breakers and spent time chatting to learners about their lives. He felt that informal conversations encouraged them to use the language and they felt that he listened to them, their concerns and their responses to the issues in the literature. He used spoken and written praise so that they were motivated to do better. He planned his literature lessons so that he stopped the story at a point filled with suspense. They all begged to get the books to take home and come back to class eager to tell the class how the story panned out. He believed that the respect and trust in the class, coupled with motivation and praise, helped to foster learners’ love for reading. This teacher, like many others, noted that the use of films would further enhance learners’ understanding of literature. However, this teacher, like many others, did not have resources to show films at their schools and two teachers did not even have electricity.

Thus, teachers who shared their narratives appeared to understand how to become better teachers of literature and used effective, engaging strategies in their classrooms.

The third question posed to teachers was, how do teachers of literature help their learners grow? Repeated responses were that a teacher needed to be prepared, loving, caring, sensitive, passionate, respectful and knowledgeable. Such a teacher listened actively to learners and created, as a teacher put it, 'a democratic atmosphere in the classroom where democratic habits and democratic processes are nurtured'. Another teacher found that her lessons were not well received by learners and thus decided to do something about it. When she started asking learners about their responses to literature, she found that learners wanted to talk about what was going on in their lives. She found that many learners were over-burdened with chores, one or both parents were absent, parents did not or could not help with homework, learners were responsible for caring for younger siblings, parents' diseases affected learners, and learners were unsupervised for long periods after school. The teacher decided to acknowledge the issues presented by her learners. She chose to focus on issues such as race, culture, values, love, loyalty, respect for family members, compassion, human rights, dignity, and responsibility when teaching literature. She talked about sensitive issues that emerged from the stories and she gave them a framework from which to start understanding literature. This gave learners confidence and she was able to see an improvement in their marks and a renewed enthusiasm and maturity in their attitudes. She realised that she needed to know who her learners were and respond to their needs. This teacher, as Mabunda's (2008) study revealed, found that engagement with literature had the ability to provide learners with an understanding of social realities.

In their quests to use literature to help their learners grow, other teachers focussed on critical thinking when analysing texts and on viewing situations in texts in thoughtful ways. They used role-playing to elicit empathy, they encouraged learners' opinions in class, and they asked learners to reflect on actions of the characters and on their own actions. A teacher noted, 'Texts open doors. I encourage them to discuss topics that might be controversial or embarrassing. I want them to think critically, to relate to things, to identify with characters. So I say, what would you have done in that situation? I want them to challenge me'. As Savvidou's (2004) study found, this teacher, too, had understood that literature allowed opportunities to learners to respond to issues, characters and events that presented themselves in the texts. Another teacher, who used poetry extensively to allow learners to express their thoughts and define their identities, noted, 'If I want them to grow, I have to be open to

growing myself. I have to be a caring, loving, good teacher who is passionate about my job and my subject'. Thus, teachers appeared to recognise various effective, engaging strategies and techniques that they could use to help their learners grow both academically and socially. Finally, interviewees were asked how teachers of literature could serve as agents of change in their classrooms. Interestingly, only four of the twenty-two teachers identified themselves as agents of change in their classrooms. They were able to identify an agent of change in the classroom and knew what needed to be done to become such agents, but the majority of interviewees, even if they were making a difference to their learners lives, believed that they were not doing enough to be labelled agents of change. One teacher noted, 'I don't know if I'm an agent of change, but I know I want my learners to use the literature to develop their language skills. Not just language as such, but to develop thinking skills so that they can reason and look at their surroundings in a thoughtful way'. Another teacher spoke about focussing her literature lessons on human rights as they appeared in the texts she was teaching. 'How will they ever grow if they don't know how to negotiate their rights and with their responsibilities?' she asked. Thus, while teachers were helping to empower their learners, they refrained from the label, agent of change. It is possible that the label carries certain expectations and responsibilities, and teachers were uncertain of their abilities to fulfil them.

Two teachers stood out in their responses in that they had long considered ways to become agents of change in their classrooms. The first teacher used a variety of texts, including media texts 'to take learners into a democracy'. She focused on South Africa's multicultural and multilingual dynamic and noted, 'I use the Constitution and the literary texts to teach values such as non-racism, non-sexism, *ubuntu*, tolerance, respect and empathy'. Her views echoed those of Henning (1993) who recognised the power of literature to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. The teacher noted that parents did not prepare their children for a multiracial, multicultural society and thus teachers had to become agents of change who taught learners values needed for transformation. The teacher noted that her learners did not come with a culture of reading or being read to and thus she had to provide a variety of texts that reflected the diversity of South Africa and the world. Besides novels, short stories and poetry, she also used cartoons, photographs, praise poetry, myths and legends in their reading repertoire. She integrated history, the arts, language, media and literature to open discussions about caring for and respecting other people and themselves. Takolander's study (2009), too, was able to show that engaging with literature provided opportunities for empowerment and social

responsibility. The atmosphere in this teacher's classroom was one where learners respected each other, and she encouraged co-operation, interaction and integration. However, the teacher made it clear, 'Nothing is forced. I always provide choices and they decide. I want an open atmosphere where I respect them and they respect me. And it's working. They love literature and I love teaching it.' The teacher's choices in the classroom reflect those of hooks (1989) who advocates that teachers provide time and space to learners, and that teachers respect all learners' views.

Using a different approach was the teacher who noted that she wanted to use her lessons 'to inculcate core values such as generosity, love, selflessness, peace and tolerance'. She explained that many of her learners came from traumatised backgrounds and abuse of varying kinds was common. Many of the learners were termed 'difficult' or 'disruptive'. In her literature lessons, she aimed to explore issues dealing with core values and discover learners' understandings of them. She said, 'I make an effort to listen to them – totally. They have life experiences that need to be heard'. She started and ended her lessons with five minutes of silence 'to reduce the energy levels'. She found this activity very useful in making learners self-reflective and focussed. Her most important concern was her classroom. 'I wanted the classroom to be filled with trust and warmth. They miss this in many areas of their lives. I needed to say, this is where you are safe'. She also entrusted reticent, shy or distant learners with positions of authority, and she encouraged participation by all. When dealing with the literary texts, she tended to use a feminist perspective and explored the roles of men and women in the texts. She clarified her stance by saying, 'I use the texts to give them self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem as men and women who can respect themselves and can challenge what is wrong. I am passionate about teaching. They are like my children'. This teacher fulfilled all of Fullan's (1993) requirements for a change agent. Fullan noted that a change agent developed strategies to accomplish goals that led to the growth of learners. Personal vision building, inquiry, mastery and collaboration underpinned such strategies where the teacher actively improved the conditions for learning in the learning environment.

In summary, the narrative research revealed how twenty-two teachers taught literature. While some found it difficult and daunting, others tried creative, innovative ways to help their learners grasp literature and ensured that, as agents of change, they made a difference to their learners' lives. They were not doing anything except upholding the South African Council for Educators' (SACE) Code of Professional Ethics (2000) which required teachers to help learners develop values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution

of South Africa. Consequently, they were obliged to serve as agents of change in their classrooms.

However, the narratives gleaned from the teachers had to be read with the understanding that the values and perspectives of the teacher-researchers could have influenced them. The researcher understood that teacher-researchers did not enter the research process objectively but worked with their colleagues in the research process using their (teacher-researchers') own very specific understandings and perceptions of teaching and learning (Lawrence 2007). In addition, what the narrative research process failed to consider was the potential power dynamics and relationships that could have shaped responses. This was a limitation of the research method used.

### **4.3. Ascertaining views of student teachers**

#### **4.3.1. Student teachers' profiles**

After processing, organising and interpreting the two sets of data from teacher-respondents, it was necessary to ascertain student teachers' understandings and experiences of the questions being asked in the study. It was also necessary to understand who participating student teachers were.

Of the sixty-six student teachers registered for the third-year module, the majority were females, reinforcing the idea that teaching is a gendered profession with a majority of females predominating in the teaching of most subjects (Drudy 2008). After South Africa became a democracy in 1994, teaching increasingly attracted females to the profession. With democracy, more females attended tertiary institutions, increasing the number of females choosing to study education and thus become teachers. In 1994, the year of South Africa's democracy, there were 58% female teachers in South Africa; in 2009, there were 77% female teachers in South African schools ([www.nationsencyclopedia.com](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com)).

The following tables describe the participating student teachers in terms of race, home language, gender and age. These indicators, gleaned from university records, describe the sixty-six student teachers registered for the English Education Major 310 module held in the first semester. The descriptors are presented in the tables that follow.

Race

Indian	African	White	Coloured	Other
34	24	5	2	1
52%	36%	8%	3%	1%

Home Language

English	IsiZulu	South Sotho	Xhosa	North Sotho
42	20	2	1	1
63%	30%	3%	2%	2%

Gender

Female	Male
53	13
80%	20%

Age

Age	Number of students
20 - 29	59
30 - 37	7

**Race, home language, gender, age: Student teachers: Table F**

Student teachers’ profiles indicated that the majority of student teachers (63%) considered English as their home language with 37% speaking an African language at home. The majority of student teachers were in their early twenties with just over 10% of the group being in their thirties. Just over half the student teachers (52%) are classified as Indian; 36% are classified as African; 8% are White; 3% are Coloured; 1% is classified Other (racial categories are still in place, even at universities, presumably to redress past inequities). All student teachers had chosen to study English Education at university to teach English at primary or high school levels.

### 4.3.2. Questionnaires to student teachers: Findings and interpretations

Questionnaires (See Appendix F) to student teachers were administered at the beginning of the research study, after they had consented to being part of the research process. While the questionnaire to the student teachers covered most aspects of the practising teachers' questionnaire, sometimes in adjusted form, student teachers' questionnaire had additional items to understand who they were and how they perceived and experienced teaching, teachers and literature classrooms.

The first four questions dealing with gender, age, high schools attended and areas in which their school were located provided background information to the researcher, and verified, to an extent, the biographical data presented above. The four questions also allowed the researcher to place the findings in a social and historical context. For instance, while three student teachers attended private schools and six student teachers attended rural government schools, the vast majority attended either middle class suburban schools or working class township schools run by the state. While the data indicated student teachers' high schools, it was not a reflection of where they lived. It was possible that a student teacher lived in an area but attended a school in another area, as is common in South Africa. Learners often attend schools outside of their areas of residence to attend what they perceive to be better schools, to attend schools close to their parent's place of work, or for other reasons.

Questions 5 and 6 (Were your parents or guardians readers? and Did your parents or guardians read to you as a child?) aimed to provide the researcher with information into student teachers' reading histories as children. The results of those two discrete questions are as follows:



#### Question 5: Were your parents/ guardians readers? Figure B

Even though explanations were not required, three student teachers explained that their parents read the Bible, two student teachers noted that their fathers read the newspaper, and one student teacher indicated that his/-her mother read magazines. What the data did reveal was that the majority of student teachers came from homes where a parent or guardian was recognised as a reader. The group that indicated having no parent or guardian that read was

just under a third of the class and so while the majority had reader role-models or authority Tables in their lives, the smaller group saw no parental Table read. It is possible that parental Tables did not read because they could not, because they chose not to, because they had other tasks to attend to, or for reasons unknown to the researcher.



**Question 6: Did your parents read to you as a child? Figure C**

Even though explanations were not required, one student teacher answered No but noted, ‘They encouraged me to read though’. Although the percentage is smaller than for Question 5, more than half the student teachers had parents or guardians who read to them as children. However, parents or guardians had never read to 44% of student teachers when the student teachers were children. In the main, if student teachers answered Yes to Question 5, they also answered Yes to Question 6, implying that student teachers who had reading role models also had those role models read to them. Their reading habits were thus reinforced. In contrast, those student teachers without reading models were further disadvantaged by not having someone read to them when they were children. However, the questionnaire did not ask student teachers if they had parents or guardians who told them stories, an omission in the questionnaire that failed to consider the possibility of student teachers’ oral traditions.

Question 7 (How would you rate your experiences in your literature class in high/ secondary school? Place a cross next to those statements that apply to you) aimed to extend the researcher’s understanding of student teachers’ perceptions and experiences of high school literature classes. Student teachers’ responses to Question 7 indicated very few student teachers’ disliking literature lessons. This makes sense as these student teachers have chosen to be teachers of English who will teach literature, among other aspects. Similarly, a relatively small number noted that they had boring teachers of literature. This is a positive sign as it indicates that most student teachers found a measure of enjoyment in their lessons and they perceived their teachers as interesting. While very few student teachers (20%) recognised their teachers as boring, only 42% perceived that their teachers used innovative methods to teach literature. Thus, teachers kept learners interested and engaged but not necessarily through innovative methods. Teachers were also not encouraging their learners to challenge assumptions with only 47% of teachers being perceived to be doing it. If learners were not

encouraged to challenge assumptions, one needs to determine possible reasons for teachers' choices to resist questioning and opposition to views.

Other responses were mostly positive. While 62% of student teachers indicated that their teachers gave them chapter summaries and thus appeared to be banking information into learners, to use Freire's term, the fact that 93% of student teachers were given questions to answer based on the text implies a high number of teachers involving learners in thinking about answers for themselves. Very positive results indicate that 89% of student teachers perceived their teachers to be well prepared, 73% of student teachers loved their literature lessons and an equal number of student teachers indicated that they were always involved in these lessons. While earlier results indicated that there were very few innovative methods used, student teachers did indicate that they were involved by taking turns reading aloud in class. If student teachers enjoyed their lessons and were always involved, one assumes that they enjoyed reading aloud in class and were possibly good readers as well. The study had to establish what enabled student teachers to determine that their teachers were well prepared and how to harness the ethos of being prepared and effective in classes.

With 71% of student teachers indicating that they discussed issues of race, culture, gender and identity in literature lessons, one had to assume that the groundwork had begun when grappling with those and other issues during the study. What needed to be determined were student teachers' understandings of those key concepts and how such concepts were engaged with in school classrooms. Finally, most student teachers (76%) identified a high school teacher of literature as a role model that they would emulate. What the study had to identify was whether the role model was an effective engaged teacher who helped learners grow and develop academically and socially or whether the teacher merely replicated existing practices.

1	I was always involved in my literature class at school.	73%
2	My teacher gave us chapter summaries.	62%
3	My teacher encouraged us to challenge assumptions.	47%
4	Different learners took turns reading aloud in class.	76%
5	We were given questions to answer based on the text.	93%
6	I had boring teachers of literature.	20%
7	Issues of race, class, gender and identity were highlighted in lessons.	71%
8	My teachers used innovative methods to teach literature.	42%

9	My teachers were well prepared for literature lessons.	89%
10	I loved literature lessons.	73%
11	I hated literature lessons.	22%
12	I have a teacher from high/ secondary school that I will use as a role model when I teach literature.	76%

**Question 7: How would you rate your experiences in your literature class in high/ secondary school?: Table G**

The second part to the questionnaire to student teachers has both discrete and open-ended questions, like the questionnaire to practising teachers. Discrete questions are usually followed by questions that require explanations. The results of the discrete questions are presented in the table and discussed thereafter.

QUESTION	YES	NO	BLANK
10. Do you believe that teachers of literature are able to equip learners to grow and develop through the study of literature in their school classrooms?	66		
11. Do your lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature?	64	1	1
12. Do you believe that lecturers of literature are able to equip student teachers to effect changes in their learners and help their school learners grow?	66		
13. Do your lecturers of literature equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your school learners grow?	53	3	10
15. Do you believe that you will be an agent of change in your school classroom?	65		1
16. Do you believe that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change in the school classroom?	64		2
17. Do you want to make a difference to your learners' lives?	56		10

**Questionnaires to student teachers: Answers to discrete questions: Table H**

Answers to the discrete questions reveal that the majority of student teachers are probably more idealistic in their views than their practising teacher counterparts. Except for some questions left unanswered, the overwhelming majority answered in the affirmative to the seven discrete questions. However, some student teachers did add in the words 'some' or 'many' next to Questions 11 (Do your lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature?) and 13 (Do your lecturers of literature equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your school learners grow?). Their open-ended questions allowed them to expand on those answers. However, ten student teachers left questions 13 and 17 blank, indicating that the student teachers either did not know or were unsure of the answers. Overall, answers were in the affirmative. When student teachers answered the questionnaire, they were beginning the third year of their degree but their second year of English Education.

They were also two years away from becoming qualified practising teachers. It is therefore possible that the questions posed above were not fully considered, as they did not need to apply the question to their lives with any urgency.

The first open-ended question asked student teachers what their ideas were of an effective teacher of literature (Question 8). Student teachers believed that an effective teacher of literature had a 'good insight' into and 'knowledge about literature'; was 'enthusiastic about literature'; had a 'clear understanding of the text's background'; 'author'; 'history'; and 'themes'; and was 'well read'; and 'loved reading'. This teacher 'encouraged reading'; 'could suggest suitable books and films'; and 'could look at literature through 21<sup>st</sup> century eyes as well as from the perspective of the period in which it was written'. As a teacher in the classroom, the person was able to make the text 'relevant to the learners and their contexts'; 'understood youth'; was able to 'see things from a learner's perspective'; and understood that 'learners were not interested in literature and reading and yet was able to get through to them'. The teacher 'brought her experiences to the lesson and allowed learners to share their experiences'. The data revealed that while an effective teacher of literature was thoroughly prepared, had researched the text and was knowledgeable about literature, an effective teacher also loved reading and, not only imparted this love for reading to the learners, but prepared lessons with specific learners in mind. The teacher thus had to be aware of who his/-her learners were and enabled them to interact in the lesson.

Many responses highlighted the teacher's relationship with learners. Several respondents noted that an effective teacher cared for their well-being, was encouraging ('pushes learners to do better'), friendly, open-minded, 'motivating', and 'sensitive to learners' needs'. More specifically, this teacher encouraged 'class discussions'; 'peer learning to reduce learners' anxiety'; 'an atmosphere where reticent learners participated'; 'dialogue and debate'; and 'did not impose views'. In fact, the effective teacher acknowledged and respected learners' views', was 'open to suggestions'; 'assisted learners with problems or misunderstandings'; 'corrected sensitively'; was 'willing to assist and guide learners without insulting their views'; and 'did not want to show learners how little they knew about literature'. Furthermore, the teacher 'showed learners that literature was fun, easy and not beyond their grasp' and the teacher 'made learners realise that literature could shape lives positively if it was used effectively'. To achieve such goals, the teacher helped learners 'unpack the text' by checking that all learners 'were on the same page (and not just in terms of the text!)' and had to 'extend learners but also make outcomes achievable'. Thus, an effective teacher's relationship with learners is

extremely important and, in many respects, determines learners' success in the literature lesson. While an effective lesson is interactive, it is also characterised by the teacher's encouragement, motivation of, and respect for learners.

On a personal level, an effective teacher had to be passionate, vibrant, enthusiastic, spontaneous, assertive, strict, committed, confident, consistent, and punctual. S/he was 'organised' and created a 'good atmosphere in the room'; 'seemed to love her work'; and 'was sure of what she is saying'. The concept of passion was repeated often with a student teacher noting that an effective teacher's 'passion for English just glows around her'. It is therefore clear that student teachers, who are not yet teachers themselves, have very high expectations of an ideal teacher of literature. While this is a positive attribute and implies that student teachers have ideals towards which they want to work, it also indicates that student teachers need to balance their ideals with practicalities of the job.

A repeated response by student teachers was the need for 'critical thinking'. An effective teacher would achieve critical thinking by posing 'thought-provoking questions'; allowing learners to 'develop their own views and understandings'; and 'never spoon feeding'. The effective teacher also had to 'make learning easy'; 'teach rather than lecture'; 'be able to think on her feet'; 'interact well'; 'engage learners'; 'be able to teach without notes'; and 'simplify and explain concepts, language and ideas thoroughly to ensure understanding'. In terms of methodology, the effective teacher used methods such as 'role-play'; 'discussions'; 'debates'; and other 'fun activities'; 'helped learners visualise'; was entertaining, exciting, interesting and flexible, 'never uses rote methods' and knew that 'humour worked'. Some student teachers focussed on the teacher's ability to communicate by noting that an effective teacher was 'audible', 'articulate', 'used the language and the voice to make the text exciting', and 'did not rely on technology – she can communicate effectively on her own'. Thus, responses indicate that an effective teacher of literature encourages critical thinking and enables learners to bring about their own learning. This is achieved by using innovative, interactive methods, lucid vocal presentations, minimal material resources and technology. In the South African situation, such requirements are understandable since, in many schools, the teacher has him/herself as a resource with very few material resources available.

Some student teachers focussed on the South African classroom and noted that an effective teacher of literature had to 'accommodate diversity' and had to be aware of 'learners' differences in terms of backgrounds and languages so as to accommodate everyone'. The

teacher thus had to be ‘prepared to cope with first and second language learners’, and had to ‘recognise that second language learners were working through a language that was not their own’. Student teachers’ responses indicated that there is a need for teachers to empower themselves with strategies to assist learners with language and other difficulties.

Further, responses indicated that an effective teacher in the South African context should not ‘segregate on the basis of colour’ and should ‘honestly believe that Black learners can do well’. While no practising teachers mentioned issues of language and race, it is possible that student teachers are reflecting their own experiences of school or university. A student teacher also noted that the South African teacher had to recognise that ‘issues of politics, injustices and power must be covered. Learners must know that history in the text must be used as a weapon to alert future generations to be consciously aware of issues that impact on people’s lives’. The response highlights the student teacher’s understanding that texts can serve as catalysts to empower and transform learners.

Ultimately, a student teacher noted, ‘If a teacher can leave the classroom with more knowledge than when he came in, then he is effective. A teacher must grow in and with a class’. This comment points to growth and development of more than just learners in the classroom. The teacher, when working towards justice in the classroom and empowerment of all learners, has the capacity to experience empowerment as well. Thus, student teachers understood that, to enable empowerment, the teacher has to be aware of and work towards rectifying divisions among learners based on race, class and language. Further, marginalised learners have to be embraced and included in the teaching and learning process. In addition, issues of power, discrimination and injustice need to be grappled with by teachers and learners during the teaching and learning of literary texts.

In contrast, ineffective teachers of literature (Question 9) saw teaching as ‘a mundane burden to get over’; ‘lacked passion’; ‘were clinical’; and ‘didn’t care if learners progressed or not’. The most repeated answers concerned a lack of engagement by ineffective teachers. Those teachers ‘didn’t allow class discussions’; ‘didn’t acknowledge and respect learners’ views’; ‘feared challenges from learners’; and could be ‘rude, disrespectful and defensive when challenged’. The ineffective teacher ‘could not stir interest’; ‘did not pose critical questions’; and ‘failed to challenge learners’. Thus, views indicate that while ineffective teachers did not care about their learners and their learners’ development, they cared very deeply about being questioned or confronted. It is possible that such teachers are insecure in their knowledge and

feel the need to quell all challenges. In addition, ineffective teachers were recognised as being unable to engage and extend learners in any meaningful way.

To suppress engagement and debate even further, ineffective teachers ‘spoon-fed information’ and ‘encouraged rote-learning’ so that learners ‘adopted the teacher’s views’. Further, the teacher ‘did not encourage learners’; ‘belittled and mocked them’; was ‘self-centred and liked to show how much he knew’; and had ‘no sense of humour’. In addition, the ineffective teacher was ‘inanimate’; ‘monotonous’; ‘boring’; ‘inarticulate’; and ‘rambled on off the topic’. On a personal note, the teacher was ‘lazy’; ‘disorganised’; ‘not punctual’; and ‘had no time management skills’. The descriptions of an ineffective teacher point to a person who is not just a poor teacher, but would be ineffectual in any profession.

Regarding the teaching of literature specifically, ineffective teachers had ‘very little knowledge of the text’; were ‘detached from the text’; ‘not enthusiastic about the text’; ‘could not link literature to current thinking’; or ‘appreciate the beauty of language’; and had ‘no love for literature, art and humanity’. Thus, student teachers recognised ineffective teachers as indifferent to and apathetic about their subject, their learners and their profession. Ineffective teachers also used ‘language that was inappropriate to the age and level of learners’; ‘shied away from anything political’; and ‘taught about race, for example, but did not discuss diversity and transformation’. Such teachers ‘marked learners based on their skin colour or home language, not on ability’; they were ‘unaware of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> language needs’; and they had ‘ingrained deep-seated biases and prejudices’. The responses indicate that ineffective teachers of literature are disconnected from the text and avoid issues of power and justice inherent in texts. Overall, the ineffective teacher was recognised as essentially intolerant and bigoted.

In response to question 11 (Do your lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature?), the majority of student teachers answered in the affirmative. However, many began their sentences with ‘some lecturers’ or ‘a few lecturers’. One student teacher clarified further by noting, ‘Although I said Yes in number 11, it refers to the good lecturers. Some are USELESS’ (student teacher’s capitalisation). Three others who made the point that their responses referred to good lecturers stated, ‘Some discuss how to become good teachers and some show it by doing. Some are lost cases’; ‘some equip us, and some don’t. I guess they teach us what not to do!!’ and ‘some or most are the best. I learnt so much so far’. Thus, student teachers could discriminate between effective and ineffective lecturers but the

majority believed that their lecturers equipped them to become effective teachers of literature. They noted that lecturers showed them ‘the importance of researching a text’; gave them ‘strategies to unpack and analyse literature’; exposed them to ‘various literary genres and literary theories’; and taught them ‘how to substantiate views by providing evidence from the text’. Thus, of the lecturers that student teachers perceived to equip them to become effective teachers of literature, the ability to research, analyse, use literary theories and genres, and substantiate views are recognised as important skills. Yet, those skills are important for any student working with literature. Student teachers of literature need additional proficiencies to use the skills in classrooms. Student teachers did mention some lecturers discussing ‘how to teach texts’ and a student teacher explained, ‘they give us the tools and skills. We have to make the jump to a school situation’. The comments thus point to some lecturers going beyond research and analysis, and moving towards application of skills. However, the comment, ‘we have to make the jump to a school situation’, highlights the student teacher’s recognition that agency is required on the part of the teacher.

In addition, student teachers noted that their lecturers served as role models. Comments included, ‘the good ones lecture in a fun, energetic manner which I want to use’; ‘their guidance shows me how to guide’; ‘they demonstrate through their teaching approaches how analysis should be done’; and ‘I really respect lecturers who go the extra mile’. The comments point to student teachers’ ability to recognise positive measures to guide their practices. Two student teachers used the words ‘follow’ in ‘I follow the ones who bring our class to life’ and ‘I will follow some of my lecturers. I want to teach the way they do. I will also create my own methods’. While the comments indicate the student teachers’ need to emulate positive role models, the comments also point to student teachers failing to carve paths of their own. Other student teachers recognised lecturers’ personal attributes as positive. They noted that some lecturers ‘demonstrated how to conduct themselves’; ‘were passionate about what they did’; ‘managed their lectures well’; ‘shared their experiences of things that happened in their own classrooms when they were teachers’; and were ‘articulate, well read and confident’. The responses indicate that, as teachers in the making, student teachers are watching and using their lecturers as examples of how to behave in classrooms. However, slavish following is problematic if student teachers are not able to determine their own ways of acting. A student teacher understood this concern and noted, ‘I have a lecturer who uses really innovative methods which I want to use. However, I will also create my own methods’. The comment

draws attention to the fact that the student teacher recognises the need to forge his/-her own way in the classroom.

The word ‘encourage’ emerged at regular intervals with student teachers stating that ‘they encourage us to read’, ‘they encourage us to participate to share our views’; ‘they encourage lateral thinking’; and ‘they encourage critical thinking’. Thus, student teachers recognised their lecturers as persons who inspired and supported them. Other comments that pointed to lecturers empowering student teachers included lecturers introducing them to ‘ideas I never had’; ‘respecting opinions’; ‘affirming experiences and perspectives’; teaching them ‘how to be bold’; and showing them ‘how to take work seriously’. The comments point to student teachers feeling valued and empowered by their lecturers. A student teacher noted, ‘some lecturers have shown me the joy of poetry, novels, movies and plays’. This comment is a reflection of very effective teaching of literature if the student teacher can highlight being ‘shown the joy’ of literature.

Only one student teacher pointed to particular issues by noting ‘when lecturers (a few) focus on politics, injustice, power and language, I get tips on how to deal with those important issues in my classroom’. Issues of ‘politics, injustice, power and language’, among others, should be grappled with and confronted in order to transform and emancipate both teachers and learners. Finally, a large number of student teachers believed that they were not yet ready to teach literature at school. Their comments included ‘I can’t say I am ready to teach literature even though I did it in second year’; ‘I’m sure I’ll get more input as the years go on’; ‘at TP (Teaching Practice) last year we were supposed to observe teachers but my mentor made me teach a novel. I didn’t know how and just taught the way I was taught. I didn’t feel happy’; and ‘I’m not yet comfortable teaching literature’. While these comments are understandable, they needed to be engaged with by student teachers in the study. If student teachers are going to schools for Teaching Practice from their second year of study, then there needs to be a measure of readiness on their part should they be asked to teach.

Question 13 (Do your lecturers equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your learners grow?) had three answers in the negative and ten blank responses. The three negative responses had two that pointed out that they were ‘not equipped’ with ‘this skill’ and the other response indicated ‘Even though literature is taught, the whole idea here at varsity is about how well students can write an academic essay. Nothing more’. These perceptions are legitimate and needed unpacking with student teachers. Many responses appeared not to

answer the question and many student teachers highlighted the effective teaching strategies that lecturers used such as ‘they use many teaching strategies that make lessons fun and interesting’.

However, some were more specific and indicated how lecturers’ teaching strategies could help to effect changes in their learners and help them grow. They noted that lecturers showed them ‘how to stimulate learners and make them think for themselves’; and ‘how to link literature to the current situation’. They also ‘advised us to allow learners to bring their home or local experiences into the classroom’; ‘encouraged contributions which built confidence’; and ‘made us respond to texts. It showed them where we were lacking’. Other student teachers pointed to strategies that they believed were effective in helping learners to grow. Such strategies included lecturers letting them know that their ideas were important. A student teacher noted, ‘When that happens, I feel wow. I will try to do that with my learners’. Two other student teachers noted, ‘I learnt that praise works’, and ‘when a lecturer tells us we can make a difference, it’s good. Can we do it? It’s all wait and see’. Thus, student teachers recognise lecturers’ teaching strategies of using affirmations, approval and commendations to serve as strong motivators in the quest to transform learners into active, independent thinkers. Student teachers also understand that learners’ backgrounds need to be honoured. The final comments ‘can we do it? It’s all wait and see’ point to the uncertainty facing student teachers as they move towards becoming effective empowered teachers in their own classrooms.

Many responses dealt with the important role of reading in classrooms and noted, ‘I can change my learners if I can get them to read’; and ‘I learnt that the texts I choose will make learners grow or keep them stuck where they are’. Baseline information from practising teachers, both in the questionnaires and in the narrative research, indicated that they too believed that effective teachers of literature are avid readers. Student teachers’ responses thus echoed practising teachers’ responses. For teachers who teach literature, reading commands a significant position. However, the student teacher who noted ‘I learnt that the texts I choose will make learners grow or keep them stuck where they are’, pointed to the student teacher recognising the power of texts and their ability to change learners’ lives.

Empowering learners was also mentioned through the comments: ‘They teach us to extend our thinking and promote critical thinking – vital for education’; ‘they encourage critical thinking and helping us to think this way will force us to help our learners to think in this manner’; and ‘township schools encourage memorising short stories. Just rote, no critical

thinking. I will have to change that, if I can'. The importance of critical thinking was a repeated concept in many answers and in these responses, student teacher recognised how their use of critical thinking in the lecture-room would transfer to their classrooms. The example of 'township schools' by a student teacher indicated not just a lack of critical thinking in the student teacher's school environment but an affirmation ('I will have to change that'), albeit guarded ('if I can'), that the student teacher would change what s/he perceived to be a deficient system of teaching. Finally, two student teachers identified how lecturers equipped student teachers to effect changes in their learners and help them grow by noting 'they don't tell you or explain to you how to bring about change or help learners to grow. It is done in subtle ways' and 'I think lecturers help us to grow as individuals and we have to transfer it into our classrooms. It's a big jump but it can be done, I suppose'. It is possible that lecturers are not explicit in enabling agency. However, the lecturer as role model and the affirmation to bring about change surfaced.

With student teachers indicating, in response to question 11 (Do your lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature), that they were not ready to teach literature in a school classroom, it was expected that they would not recognise their ability to be change agents in their classrooms. Yet, except for one response, all student teachers believed that they would be change agents (Question 15: Do you believe that you will be an agent of change in your school classroom?). Their understandings of the concept therefore needed to be considered by looking at their answers to the open-ended question (Question 14: Teachers can serve as agents of change in the school classroom. What do you understand 'agents of change' to mean?). Firstly, four student teachers left the open-ended question blank, possibly because they could not define an agent of change. Yet, they knew that they would be agents of change in their classrooms. Two student teachers believed a change agent should 'change learners from bad to good' and that teachers as change agents had the 'ability and power to persuade learners into their way of thinking'. The two responses indicate that learners are difficult or flawed in some way and need to be altered or modified by their teachers, and that teachers could induce their learners to think in a specific way.

However, other student teachers defined change agents differently. The most common answers were that agents of change 'brought positive change'; 'set the platform for change'; 'removed fear'; had the 'power to change minds and hearts'; and were 'positive people' who served as 'catalysts for change'. Agents of change also made learners 'believe in their capabilities'; 'responsible for their own learning'; 'skilled and capable to solve problems';

and 'independent'. In the main, therefore, change agents were perceived as activists who facilitate independence, responsibility, and transformation in their learners.

Other student teachers believed that a change agent should 'model appropriate behaviour that learners will strive towards'; 'be role models of democracy'; 'make a classroom democratic'; 'teach learners to be respectful of diverse opinions'; 'move a classroom towards a society free from gender and race bias'; and 'change learners' stereotypes and prejudices'. Finally, two student teachers noted that 'the change agent should also allow learners time to reflect on what is right and wrong. In that way you teach them morals and ethics' and 'the change agent changes attitudes and actions of oppression. They change negative stereotypes. Most important, they instil pride in learners'. These responses indicated that student teachers believe that change agents in a classroom need to serve as role models to learners, and build and transform learners into democratic citizens who themselves create democratic environments, free from bias, stereotypes, prejudices and oppression.

However, student teachers also perceived agents of change in a classroom as those who 'made learning effective'; 'used a variety of strategies'; and 'taught in an innovative way'. The word 'innovation' was a repeated answer with one student teacher noting that 'change agents brought innovative transformation'. The student teachers cited above understood that change agents brought pedagogical change in the form of novel strategies. While some of the strategies could prove transformative, teachers will need more than novelty to serve as agents of change.

The final question to student teachers was whether they wanted to make a difference to their learners (Question 17). Fifty-six of the sixty-six student teachers answered this and the follow up question: If Yes, say how you will do this (Question 17.1) with one student teacher noting, 'this is very complicated to answer in this space'. The student teacher's comment could very well sum up the views of the ten student teachers who did not respond or they might not have had an answer or, as it was the last question, they might have been tired of answering the questionnaire. The question asked student teachers how they wanted to make a difference to their learners and thus served as a very open question that could have been answered from many angles.

A student teacher noted, 'I would like every lesson I teach to make a positive impression on learners' and another indicated that s/he would create a classroom 'free from fear, filled with trust where learners knew they could count on my support and care'. Other student teachers

focused on how they would make a difference and noted that they would ‘use learners’ prior knowledge and build on it’; ‘try and find the barriers to their learning and break them down’; and be ‘sensitive to learners’ needs’. Student teachers also noted that they would teach learners how to ‘think critically’; would ‘stop the jug-mug approach’; would ‘start discussions about morals and values without indoctrinating them in any way’; and would ‘encourage them to read’. As a student teacher noted ‘Learners in township high schools can’t read. I want to change that. I want them to love reading’. Comments indicated that student teachers wanted enabling classroom environments that encouraged analytical thinking and open discussions, and that moved away from feeding information to learners. Student teachers made it clear that questions of who learners were, what their needs were, and what prevented learning needed to be understood and affirmed. As stated earlier, the importance of reading, especially in township schools, was again raised. However, the comment, ‘Many learners in township high schools can’t read’ is possibly a generalisation but is how the student teacher perceives his/-her school and other schools as well. Strategies to change the perceived *status quo* have had to be considered with student teachers. Overall, student teachers understood that it is possible to make a difference to the academic and social lives of their learners by educating and empowering them.

Other common responses were that student teachers would make a difference to their learners by being ‘inspirational’ and by ‘exciting learners and motivating them to do better’. Student teachers would also ‘show them love, understanding, tolerance and care’ and ‘show them how they can be the best they possibly can be’. Comments indicated that student teachers aimed to bring about personal growth and the capability for expansive thought in learners by serving as motivating role models. A student teacher pointed out that s/he wanted to ‘be available to learners. Children in rural areas are not encouraged to do well. I know – I’m from there. I want them to trust me to make them do better and become something’. This student teacher revealed not just an intimate knowledge of the rural environment and the way schooling operated there, but s/he also affirmed the commitment to change and transformation. Another student teacher noted ‘I want to make learners aware of the past and how challenges were overcome to reach democracy. I want them to understand each other. I want learners to behave in a way that promotes peace, harmony and positive change among them’. Like the previous comments, these comments indicate a determination to effect changes by opening up dialogue on democratic ways of acting and behaving. Finally, a student teacher enthused ‘I want to be the best teacher possible so that I make a difference to my learners and to myself’.

The final words ‘and to myself’ are significant because they indicate that the student teacher recognises the importance of self-transformation together with the transformation of his/-her learners.

#### **4.4. Comparison of responses**

There are many similarities in the responses of practising teachers and student teachers in terms of the teaching strategies they believe will produce effective, engaged teachers. Both groups understand the importance of a teacher of literature knowing learners’ histories and being thoroughly prepared for lessons. Both groups recognise that a teacher has to read, research and unpack the text before going into a classroom. However, practising teachers also recognise the value of preparing the pedagogical practice to be used for facilitating the lessons. Being practitioners in the teaching and learning environment, teachers’ responses reveal the importance of knowing not just what to teach but also how to teach it. While student teachers identify a passion for reading as important, teachers believe that teachers of literature need passion for the text, subject, learners and reading in general. Again, teachers are located in a position of knowing, where enthusiasm for reading is important but so are the persons with whom they are engaging. Teachers thus suggest the importance of teachers’ relationships with learners in the teaching and learning process.

Both groups also believe that learners should be engaged in the lesson, and while teachers identify ‘creative activities’ and ‘co-operative learning’ as effective ways to engage learners, student teachers recognise the value of ‘interactive methods’; ‘lucid vocal presentations’; and the use of ‘minimal technology’ and ‘material resources’. Thus both groups are aware of the importance of using strategies where learning is seen as a collaborative process. However, student teachers identify the need to move away from dependence on technology. In addition, both groups stress the need for critical thinking, with teachers, with their insight and experience of the teaching and learning situation, expanding the notion of critical thinking to include critical reading, critical questions, and logical reasoning. However, teachers stress that for strategies to succeed, teachers need to establish democratic classrooms where learners and teachers are aware of their agency and voice, and where all players in the teaching and learning process are prepared to listen to each other.

Practising teachers and student teachers also believe, in the main, that their lecturers have prepared them to teach literature at schools. However, many student teachers, as was expected of students who are two years away from entering a classroom on their own, did not believe

that they are ready to teach literature. Both groups also believe that literature is an effective strategy to achieve growth, development and change in learners. Both groups recognise the value of literature to develop language skills and thus improve learners' ability to interact socially. They also understand that literature can introduce learners to different worlds and cultures, help learners to understand the norms, values and customs of other people, and thus lead learners to accept people who are different to themselves. According to both groups, literature also has the ability to help learners grow academically and morally. Thus, there is a general belief among both groups that literature can help learners develop, grow and change.

While the responses seem to indicate that it is literature alone that can transform and empower learners, it must be borne in mind that this study focuses on literature and the questions are asked of teachers of literature and of student teachers who are studying literature. In addition, the questions very specifically focus on and ask about literature. Thus, it is not in any way meant to imply that the use of literature is the only way to achieve empowerment and transformation. Further, at no point in the collection of baseline information from both practising teachers and student teachers is a specific type of literature mentioned. Thus, literature is used as a term to define works of fiction and non-fiction from various genres.

In response to the question of being agents of change, student teachers believe that they will be agents of change in their classrooms. In anonymous questionnaires, practising teachers responded in a similar fashion to their student teacher counterparts. However, in narrative research, where a teacher interviewed a colleague, only four teachers (18% of the population) stated that they are agents of change in their classrooms. The differences in the responses point to teachers' understandings of the importance and significance of the change agent. It is possible that teachers recognise that being a change agent requires commitment and active implementation of change strategies. Therefore, publically acknowledging such a role will be done with great care and consideration. However, all groups acknowledge that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change. Practising teachers recognise an agent of change as a person who serves as a positive role model, and is recognised by learners as having characteristics of trustworthiness, warmth, love and generosity. Both groups identify a change agent as someone who respects learners and is respected by learners. Teachers note that agents of change run democratic classrooms that are safe and include all learners, and where empathy, human rights and responsibilities are emphasised. Student teachers recognise change agents' classrooms as characterised by justice and the empowerment of learners and themselves, where learners are motivated and encouraged to do well, and where marginalised

learners are embraced. Student teachers also note that change agents work to remove divisions among learners based on race, class and language. While practising teachers indicate that change agents acknowledge and embrace issues of race, gender, *ubuntu* and tolerance, student teachers point out that change agents recognise and confront issues of race, class, power, injustice, discrimination and language in their lessons. In the main, therefore, both groups recognise that an agent of change works towards making a positive difference to learners' lives.

#### **4.5. Conclusion: Reflections on the way forward**

After findings were verified with respondents, student teachers and the researcher considered the way forward. A class discussion was held with student teachers to ascertain their views on the findings and the research process to follow. The first important issue to emerge from the discussion was that while student teachers knew the 'correct answers to questions', they were not sure how to implement the ideas and had many questions about the study. For instance, they knew that it was very important to engage learners in the literature lesson but were not clear how to attain engagement. Many student teachers pointed out that during their Teaching Practice session in second year, they found learners very difficult to handle and could not imagine engaging them in literature lessons. They also noted that although they wanted learners to be passionate about literature, they believed that many learners disliked literature and literature lessons and thus building passion would prove difficult. Student teachers noted that their teacher mentors indicated during Teaching Practice that group-work was, as a student teacher noted, 'a nightmare', with teachers, especially in the high school, preferring to avoid any form of group-work. Thus, student teachers were concerned about being asked to use collaborative work with learners.

Other concerns revolved around the strategies that should be used to teach literature. While student teachers knew that they should use interactive methods, they were not confident about how to implement them. Student teachers asked if there was a formula or set method of teaching literature, if each type of literature (poetry, novels, plays, short stories) had a specific methodology, and they indicated that their responses to the use of technology was a reaction to the overuse and poor use of technological assistance in the form of Power Point presentations by lecturers. An important statement came from a student teacher who expressed her fear that she would teach the way she was taught at school. She noted that her teacher read to them, gave them summaries and then gave them questions to answer. They

were never asked for their opinions or responses to texts. Many student teachers agreed with her and one student teacher explained, ‘if you were asked a question, it had a yes or no as an answer. Nothing else’.

A student teacher asked, ‘When we go to schools, will you be expecting us to teach without the cane?’ The question was a direct reference to the use of corporal punishment, a practice that is illegal in South Africa. Many student teachers then proceeded to explain how ‘every township and rural school’ used corporal punishment. A student teacher expanded, ‘No Black learner knows a school without the stick, unless he goes to a mixed school’.

A second important issue to emerge revolved around using literature to help learners grow and develop. While student teachers indicated that they knew the power and value of literature, they were not sure how to use it to make learners grow and develop. They recognised that literature made a difference to the way they saw the world, but could not identify exactly what was done to make them feel that way. Working from their experience of Teaching Practice, student teachers found that learners appeared to dislike reading. Thus, student teachers were concerned about how to create passion for reading in their learners. On the issue of the importance of critical thinking, many student teachers knew it was important for learners to develop the skill. However, many student teachers did not know how to develop the skill, and some indicated that they were not sure what critical thinking entailed. One student teacher noted, ‘I know it’s important because our lecturers say so all the time’.

The final issue involved student teachers becoming agents of change in their classrooms. Student teachers indicated that they wanted to become agents of change and they wanted to make a positive difference to their learners. However, student teachers noted that their ideas of change implementation and being an agent of change were very unclear. They had strong reservations regarding their ability to become agents of change and pointed out that while they desired to make a difference to their learners’ lives, they were unsure how to achieve the goal. One student teacher summed up her concerns, ‘I want to be a good teacher that helps learners to change and grow, but I don’t even know how to get their respect. It’s tough’.

After ascertaining student teachers’ views, they decided the way forward. It was decided that with each text studied, literary theories and pedagogical tools would be used and the concept ‘agent of change’ would be unpacked to move student teachers closer to becoming agents of change. Student teachers would also consider how the literary texts could serve as examples of how texts could help learners grow and develop. It was decided that lectures would be

interactive, would use co-operative learning strategies and that the researcher would model and then facilitate discussion on how to work with issues in the text, execute pedagogical tools, and work towards becoming agents of change. Finally, student teachers were reminded that they would be observed in the lecture-room and that a sample of student teachers would be asked to participate in focus groups and interviews as the research proceeded.

The research process began with two important findings that emerged from the student teachers themselves. The first was the eagerness of student teachers to reveal which responses from the questionnaires were theirs, even if the responses were unpopular ones and thus, were badly received by other student teachers. The second was the willingness of student teachers to serve in the focus groups or interviews. The researcher identified the first finding as honesty on the part of student teachers to reveal their current ways of thinking so that change may be implemented. The second finding seemed to imply a readiness on the part of student teachers to involve themselves in the research process that was being designed to help them, student teachers of literature, become agents of change. Finally, student teachers accepted that they would be designing the participatory action research cycles and, thus, would be participants with the researcher in the process. Student teachers and the researcher agreed that student teachers would be referred to as participants as they were joint contributors to the research process. Thus, participants' understandings of the baseline information informed decisions on how to proceed and the participatory action research process got underway.

## CHAPTER 5: FIRST YEAR OF STUDY

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### 5.1. Introduction

Chapter five examines how cycles one, two and three in the first year of the study have been undertaken. Each cycle is explored by introducing the three texts, namely the novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior* by Zakes Mda, the film, *The Colour of Paradise* by Majid Majidi and the play, *Sophiatown* by The Junction Avenue Theatre Company, and discussing how each text was engaged with. Thereafter, findings are presented, analysed and interpreted. Finally, each cycle is reflected on and the group's decisions on how to proceed are presented.

The primary focus of the study has been student teachers of literature, and they have entered the study as co-researchers and participants in the research process. Thus, from this point on, the student teachers of literature are referred to as participants.

#### 5.1.1. The overarching structural framework of the cycles

Each cycle of the participatory action research comprised three weeks of lectures and tutorials. Each week, participants had two lectures and two tutorials, resulting in six lectures and six tutorials per cycle. However, cycles using film study (cycles two and five) comprised two weeks of lectures and tutorials, resulting in four lectures and four tutorials per cycle. The double period lectures and double period tutorials were ninety minutes each.

Each lecture was placed within a framework that allowed for flexibility and adaptations. The framework was divided into three parts: working with the text; engaging in activities that emerged from the text to grapple with research questions; critically reflecting, in writing or verbally, on activities or issues that were considered.

In the main, each lecture began with either a question or problem to participants with several possible solutions posed to them. The question or problem helped to reveal what participants were thinking and the lecture then explored and built on the suggestions that emerged from the discussion. Within the lecture, specific issues that emerged from the text such as race,

class, gender, culture, power and identity, among others, were discussed as a class, and then participants worked in pairs or as a group to answer, in writing or orally, a provocative question or respond to a provocative statement, and answers were shared with the class. Throughout the lecture, participants' views were challenged, issues were open to debate, and participants were encouraged to interrupt the lecture and ask questions, if the need arose.

When participants asked questions, the researcher often repeated or paraphrased the questions to enable second language speakers of English to fully understand, and then answers were requested from participants. Throughout the lecture, the researcher asked questions. Initially, questions were convergent and then moved to divergent or open-ended questions which usually had more than one answer. Lectures worked using interactive group questioning, in parts, to involve as many participants as possible. Time was also allocated at the end of the lecture for participants' questions.

Various activities were used in the lecture including writing tasks where the researcher stopped the lecture to ask participants to write for one or two minutes in response to a question and then discuss answers with the group. Research by Ruhl, Hughes and Schloss (1987) found that students learnt more information if the lecturer allowed students to consolidate their notes by pausing three times for two minutes each during a lecture. This was attempted during lectures. Other writing activities included multiple-choice questions, quizzes, filling in tables, true-false questions, writing paragraphs, and filling in the blanks.

Activities other than writing activities included role-plays, scenarios and other drama strategies, debates, problem-solving activities, and reading aloud, among others. When music, digital versatile disks (DVDs), pictures, and film clips were used in the lecture, the focus moved to participants' aural and visual senses. Activities where participants were actively involved made the learning process more enabling for speakers whose home language was not English. Participants also worked with newspaper articles, academic articles, interviews and critiques. When working with an article which participants were to have read before the lecture, questions were asked and issues from the article were alluded to from time to time so that participants realised that it was worth their while doing the reading without the researcher being overly prescriptive. At various times, language issues were pointed out incidentally with particular emphasis on the role of language as it constructed realities and social categories, and highlighted or suppressed agency, among many other functions.

Generally, the lecture format used various activities, and the researcher aimed to include elements of speaking, listening, reading and writing in each lecture, and all pedagogical tools were unpacked as they were used so that participants knew how to transfer the tools to their classrooms. Activities were used to address issues in the text, as pedagogical tools, and as ways to help participants realise the aim of becoming agents of change. Overall, the researcher aimed to make the educational experiences enjoyable, relaxed and varied to keep participants attentive and involved. Ultimately, the researcher used encouragement and praise to motivate participants, and created a safe environment where participants felt free and empowered to give of their best.

The researcher aimed to underpin the lectures with critical pedagogy principles and aimed to share in the intellectual, social and emotional growth of the participants. She also endeavoured to provide non-threatening, non-discriminatory conditions where learning can be most effective, and to teach in a manner that responds to the needs of the participants, and that respects and cares for them and emphasises their well-being. Scrivener's (2005) ideas also shaped the researcher's role. Scrivener notes that a lecturer should be an expert in the subject matter, should be an involver by using effective methodologies to facilitate learning the subject matter, and should be an enabler by creating conditions in the lecture-room where effective learning can take place. Thus, in each lecture in each cycle the researcher aimed to be an expert, an involver and an enabler.

After each cycle, data was collected using various data collection methods and data was analysed by the researcher and selected volunteer-participants. Usually, participants worked in two groups of five, each cycle used different groups to analyse, and participants who provided data were asked to verify analyses. Analyses were reflected on by the entire group and the next cycle was planned.

## **5.2. Cycle one**

### **5.2.1. Engagement with *The Madonna of Excelsior* by Zakes Mda (2002)**

The aim of cycle one was to study Zakes Mda's novel *The Madonna of Excelsior* as a literary text using various literary theories such as practical criticism (by focussing on text-centred criticism with a close reading and close analysis of the novel), reader response (by focussing on the reader as an active maker of meaning), marxist literary theory (by focussing on the economic forces, social hierarchies, individual struggles and larger class interests in the novel) and feminist literary theory (by focussing on gender relations and gender

representations). By using various literary theories, participants engaged more fully with the text. They could also read and understand the text from various perspectives.

Over three weeks, the lectures focussed on the author's biography, the novel as history, South African history (from 1970 - when apartheid shaped people's lives - to approximately 2000 - six years after democracy), and the author's depiction of a democratic South Africa. The lectures also considered the art of Father Frans Claerhout (the artist whose work is described in the novel), the references to music, and the significance of the symbolism of beekeeping, cosmos flowers and sunflower fields. As a group, participants also assessed the role of the communal narrator, considered whether the novel could be categorised as satire, and judged whether the novel was one of reconciliation and forgiveness or one of anger. Characters and relationships were explored by examining the representation of men, women and different racial groups in the novel, the depiction of sexuality, the portrayal of the protagonist, Niki as an illustration of the madonna-whore dichotomy, and the repeated references to 'the sins of our mothers' (Mda 2002, 1).

The novel also served as a springboard to experience different pedagogical tools that participants could use in their classrooms. Newspaper articles were used to help participants understand the thinking of the time, especially the focus on the Immorality Act in South Africa, where persons of different races were prohibited by law to indulge in sexual activities. A newspaper *The Friend* was used to unpack issues of race, class and gender in 1970s South Africa. The group also read interviews with the author, studied Father Frans Claerhout's pictures from the era, and dealt with questions about issues in the text. Many extracts from the text were also read aloud mainly by the researcher because participants indicated that they felt uncomfortable reading aloud in class. Participants' reluctance to read aloud in class was not commented on during lectures so as not to draw attention to what might have been a lack of confidence, linguistically, socially, or otherwise. However, the issue was raised during the reflections at the end of the cycle.

The final aim was to unpack the concept 'agent of change' and determine how issues in the novel could serve as catalysts for participants to serve as agents of change. Such issues included class, race, culture, gender and patriarchy, identity, and ubuntu. First, discussions aimed at unpacking and exploring the concept 'agents of change' were held with participants, readings on the concept 'agents of change' were shared, and then the issues were examined to

determine how they (the issues) would be used in a school classroom to make a difference to learners' thinking, to affirm who they were, and to serve as stimuli to know more.

### 5.2.2. Data collection, findings and interpretations

Cycle one used observations (See Appendix G), written work, drawings (See Appendix L), and student evaluations (See Appendix O) to identify participants' responses to the interventions and to determine the extent to which the research questions were answered. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the various data collection methods: Effectiveness of teaching strategies; Responses to the text as a means to understand participants; Notions of teacher identities.

#### 5.2.2.1. Theme 1: Effectiveness of teaching strategies

This study used modelling, experiential learning and explicit teaching to identify and experience effective, engaging teaching strategies. In the lectures, strategies were modelled by the researcher, various strategies were actively experienced by the participants and each strategy was considered and appraised. Questions 1 – 9 and question 15 of the student evaluations pointed to the strategies used in the lectures. A majority of the sixty participants indicated a 'strongly agree' response and a small number indicated an 'agree' response to most of the questions. Question 8 (I felt comfortable to participate in class) had a high response rate indicating a 'neutral/-not sure/-don't know' response. There were no participants who indicated a 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' response. The findings of the student evaluations related to the theme are presented in table form, and thereafter the findings are analysed and interpreted.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
1. The lecturer was well prepared.	60		
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	60		
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	56	4	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	55	6	
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	58	2	

6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	54	6	
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	55	5	
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	4	6	50
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	60		
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	60		

**Theme 1: Effectiveness of teaching strategies: Table I**

Questions 1, 2, 9 and 15, dealing with the lecturer's preparedness, the delivery of the lectures, the lecturer's relationship with the class and the level of participants' enjoyment of the lectures, were unanimously perceived very positively. This was the aim of the researcher: to model the importance of being prepared, of presenting clear, well communicated lessons, of establishing a positive relationship with participants, and of making the lectures enjoyable. The majority of participants indicated that they understood the language used in the lecture (Question 3) and they were generally confident that they would be able to implement the strategies in their own classrooms (Question 6). In addition, most participants believed that the lectures were interesting and stimulating (Question 4), the strategies helped them to understand the text (Question 5), and the lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7). The findings indicated that participants perceived the lectures positively answering mainly 'strongly agree' and some answering 'agree'. No participants answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. However, the researcher was aware that, as this was the first cycle of the research, participants had not engaged in critical reflection and their responses could indicate a naive uncritical response to lectures that were different from what they were used to. It could also indicate that the researcher prepared lectures with the student evaluation questions in mind and thus created and developed lectures to ensure positive responses. Nevertheless, the researcher was aware that she drew from Ladson-Billings (2009) suggestions that learning, while challenging to participants, should be designed to enable success.

However, the responses to Question 7 (I felt comfortable to participate in class) revealed a large majority who indicated an 'unsure' response to the question. Interestingly, they did not disagree with the statement; they appeared unsure. It is possible that participants did not understand the question. And yet, all student evaluations were answered anonymously in the lecture-room and participants had access to the lecturer if clarity was sought. What was

important was that a large majority of participants did not believe that they were comfortable participating in class. It is believed that the use of interactive, collaborative learning, which was a distinct contrast to the traditional lecture mode, made participants unsure of their levels of comfort in embarking on a new way of knowing.

The observations of the lecture-room verified the student evaluations. The observations of the class by the researcher revealed that participants were interested in the information gleaned from newspaper articles and interviews and robust discussions ensued. Participants also voiced their opinions on the paintings by Claerhout, the artist named in the novel, and they listened intently as extracts from the novel were read aloud and reacted to extracts read. However, not all participants engaged in the class discussions and in the feedback from the pair-work. This observation seemed to reinforce participants' answers to Question 7 (I felt comfortable to participate in class) in the student evaluations. Often, when participants were asked to respond, they declined and the researcher respected their choices of whether to get involved or not. The researcher was aware of the need to build trust in small incremental steps. However, the fact that no participant answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' seems to indicate a general feeling of ambivalence and since they had not rejected the idea of participation outright, there was hope that, with greater exposure to co-operative methods, they would feel more comfortable in subsequent cycles.

#### **5.2.2.2. Theme 2: Responses to the text as a means to understand participants**

As this was the first cycle of the participatory action research study, it was necessary to fully understand who the participants were, what resources they brought with them, and how the resources were affirmed and shared. While observations focussed on what the researcher and participants were saying and doing, they were also designed to determine what capital participants brought with them to the process, building on Ladson-Billing's (2009) suggestion that the learning process should build on participants' knowledge.

The novel *The Madonna of Excelsior* served as an effective catalyst for participants to reveal their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values. As most participants would have been born just prior to South Africa's democracy, they were largely unaware of the intricacies of apartheid law. While they knew of the laws, such as the Immorality Act, the Group Areas Act and the Pass Laws, they did not fully understand how the laws were implemented and the consequences of breaking the laws. The Immorality Act, which forbade sexual relations between people of different race groups and which featured prominently in the novel, needed

to be explained and researched, and still participants expressed incredulity that the law was allowed to be implemented for as long as it did. However, knowledge of the Act did help participants to understand why people would want to do what was forbidden. As a participant noted, 'You can't stop people from getting together and the more you tell them to stay apart, the more they will try to get together'.

The discussions and pair-work also noted that mixing of races was inevitable throughout history all over the world. Another participant shared her readings on how indentured Indian women who came to South Africa in the nineteenth century were often forced to engage in sexual relations with their colonial masters and the babies that resulted from such encounters. An interesting development occurred when a participant said, 'So, we may all be mixed in some way'. The response to the statement from another participant who noted, 'I believe I'm a pure African' was the catalyst for many lively discussions over the three weeks. Much discussion emerged from considering the South African identity and the identity of being human.

Discussions on other issues too proved interesting and often revealed participants' understandings and values. When considering the concept of *ubuntu* in the novel, responses such as 'That's how Black people behave'; 'In our community, people just take over when there are problems. No one has to ask'; 'Old people, like before, there was this thing that you have to look after them and treat them with respect. But life is changing'; and 'It's a human thing, isn't it? It's not just restricted to one race. You can't just abandon your people' revealed participants' understandings of how their communities operated. (The word '*ubuntu*' comes from the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. A very basic translation of *ubuntu* is, a person is a person through other people).

Participants also revealed strong understandings of how issues of class, race and gender, found in the novel, played out in their lives. Responses to incidents and characters in the novel elicited comments such as, 'People react when it's a race thing. But you must see how rich people treat poor people. It's like I'm better than you, I'm rich, so I can treat you like dirt' and 'We can't change things. It's a fact, money talks'. Other comments also revealed participants' comprehension of how their lives were framed. Such comments included, 'White people treat Black people that way', and 'It's a class thing. Watch people, not only Whites, how they treat their maids, like they're not there, like they're invisible'. Other participants related incidents from their educational lives by noting, 'In mixed schools, you know, multi-

racial schools, they still make you feel inferior. And the teachers say, “those girls”. I want to scream. I mean, why are we “those girls”?’ and ‘When lecturers ask you something in a lecture and some of them will put on this stupid accent, trying to imitate a Black accent. I want to ask, you think you’re funny? And then people laugh. I don’t get the joke. I just see it as racist and stupid’. The observations in the lecture-rooms thus provided insights into how participants lived their lives and their understandings of how their social, economic and political contexts worked in favour of some and belittled others. Participants also understood how relationships were controlled by power and advantage (Habermas 1972) and were able to identify the significance of the social and cultural forces in the novel (Monkman, MacGillivray and Levya 2003). More importantly, participants could relate the issues in the text to their own lives.

The responses to issues of gender were the most revealing with comments such as ‘Men are so animal-like. Like at the bus rank, they look and say things and act stupid. I want to say, ‘Do you talk like that to your mother or sister? Maybe girls like it’. When evaluating the character of Niki, a main character in the novel, many females in the class judged her very harshly as ‘a whore through and through’; ‘a married woman who saw a good time’; and ‘a common prostitute. She took money for sex’. It was the minority of males in the class who pointed out that there were extenuating circumstances to Niki’s behaviour and cited her abusive husband and her need for revenge against the ‘madam’s’ humiliating actions.

Responses to a written task seemed to reinforce their beliefs. The question asked was,

*‘Mda uses Niki to explore the madonna / whore dichotomy’ (Taitz, n.d.). Explain, with reasons, whether you agree with Taitz or not. Discuss your responses as a group and then write out your answer on your own. Your response to the question will be collected.*

Most responses, which were anonymous and thus the sex of the participant was unknown, seemed to be very harsh and judgemental with participants describing Niki as a ‘cheap slut’; ‘as a mother, she should have known better. How was she going to be a role model to her child?’ and ‘she went after a married man. That is a whore’. While some answers acknowledged the fact that she was a good mother and some reflected their understandings of Mda’s depiction of women as ‘difficult to define without considering the context of her behaviour’, the majority of answers, even if they considered Niki’s circumstances, noted that ‘she is no madonna’; ‘she sent her child to collect money from her lover’; and ‘sex for money – what else is it but a whore plying her trade’. Finally, a participant wrote,

I understand what she did. I understand her need for revenge against a system that she could not fight. I understand that she only had her body to use against domination. But, was this the best line of action for her own well-being? She didn't even love him. He was Madam's husband, the ultimate prize, but at what price?

Yet, female participants in the lecture-room would mention, probably in jest, that they would only marry rich men and one participant revealed, 'I only take lifts from young good-looking guys with good cars, Mercs, BMs. No *skoroskoros* (broken down cars) for me, thank you'. Discussions led to an acknowledgement by participants that an element of double standards prevailed in what they judged to be their espoused values as opposed to the way they conducted their lives. In addition, they accepted that gender identities do not exist in isolation but are shaped by society, policies and other influences of social identity (Ong 2000). They also acknowledged that they needed to address issues of stereotypes and biases, as suggested by Ladson-Billings (2009). Two participants indicated that they hated the novel because they found the extracts focussing on sexual acts and sexuality 'disgusting'. One participant even said, 'there's this one part on page .... where they say' and she proceeded to quote the extract (which she found disgusting) without the aid of the text. While the other participants found the incident funny and a participant asked, 'How many times did you read it that you can quote it?' the researcher had to assure the participant that she had a right to her opinions and convictions, and they needed to be respected.

It was also necessary to understand participants' understandings of the history in the text in relation to their own lives. Initially, many participants expressed a lack of enthusiasm for the text because, in some instances, participants found it 'confusing' but in many instances participants were not keen to do 'another apartheid story' because they wanted to 'leave the past behind'. However, their responses to a written task seemed to contradict their responses. The task included the following questions:

*Do you believe that a knowledge of the past is essential for a better understanding of the present? Does a knowledge of the past help us in our choices in the future? How will you address this question with learners in a classroom? Consider these questions and write up a response to them on your own. Responses will be collected.*

All fifty-six participants recognised the need to know about the past in order to 'move forward'. Participants noted that the past 'creates your identity'; 'helps you to make informed choices'; 'shows you how to do things differently'; 'helps you understand why people behave the way they do'; 'allows the youth to appreciate the history and struggles of our forefathers'

and ‘tells you how you came into being and how your life has been shaped to be what it is right now’. It was difficult to explain how participants went from being ‘sick and tired of going on about the past’ at the beginning of the first lecture, to every single participant recognising the importance of knowing about the past by the end of the week (after a double-period lecture and a double-period tutorial). The first week of lectures explored South Africa’s past in general and how participants fitted into that past more specifically. Observations in the lecture-room indicated enthusiastic responses from participants and thus could explain their recognition of the importance of knowing about the past.

Many participants drew on the South African example in their written tasks with a participant noting,

I often questioned why we always focus on apartheid when we should be moving away from it. But I know that if we don’t know about our past, how are we to move forward?

Others noted, ‘Knowing there was apartheid in the past helps to understand people’s actions today as there are people who still discriminate against others’; ‘knowing about South Africa’s past makes us aware of the hardships people endured’; ‘the past helps us understand the plight of our ancestors’; ‘it is only through knowing about the past that one can understand why racism and race are still such sensitive issues in this country’; and ‘the past in our country is nothing to be proud of. We have hopefully learnt from our past mistakes’. Some participants noted how knowledge of the past could hurt you by stating, ‘Some people are brought up with their parent’s anger and frustration because of apartheid and they continue with the same ideas. If they know about the past, they can make choices to live differently’ and ‘the past may hurt and make you bitter, but it may also set you free when you make the choices to change’. Despite the question not asking participants to focus on South Africa, they could recognise the applicability of the question to South Africa’s past. While participants believed that they were aware of and understood peoples’ behaviours and thoughts, they also seemed to indicate that a level of acceptability for racist and other actions was allowable. No participant came out and confronted any unacceptable, including racist, behaviour. However, participants understood the availability of choices in their lives and worked against a defeatist approach.

Participants also understood how knowledge of South Africa’s past could empower them by indicating that ‘knowing about the past makes us tolerant and sensitive’; ‘Black Africans are well informed about how people in the past struggled because they lacked knowledge and

education. We use the knowledge to make wise choices that will keep us away from the struggles of poverty and ignorance'; 'in the past, Black people were deprived of their freedom but many managed to make something of themselves. We can draw from their strengths'; and 'to truly appreciate freedom, education and free will, we will have to look back to the past at those who didn't have such liberties, so that we can grab hold of opportunities that people fought for. To have everything at our disposal through the sufferings of our people in the past and still not make the right choices is foolish'. Participants were indicating a strong understanding of how people in the past endured injustices and how participants could use the examples from the past to improve their own lot. Ndebele (2012) refers to this as reflective activism whose logic only literature may depict with some measure of credible belief.

Other participants related the question to personal events in their lives. A participant noted, 'My parents failed to bring me up, so I was sent to my grandmother's place. She taught me things by telling me how she grew up, what she and others did in the past and what they went through. Her advice and teachings have made me the person I am'. Another shared, 'If your mother was pregnant at an early age and therefore did not complete her schooling, suffered for not being educated and, as a result, brought you up in a starving home, you would not want to do what your mother did. Only when I heard the true story of why I was poor did I decide to avoid my mother's actions at all costs'. A third participant stated, 'My mother, to this day, resents the *Boer* (Afrikaner) because of how she had to live her life. Her father was White and her mother was Black (so she's Coloured) and she never got to meet her father because of the Immorality Act. If you didn't know the laws of the past, then you wouldn't understand where her hatred stems from'. These participants, and others, were reflecting, on a very personal level, how the actions of people in the past impacted on their lives. They were also acknowledging that the social, historical and political context of South Africa determined and moulded their private lives.

Participants also related the question to their future classrooms with, 'If a child in your class behaves in a strange manner, I cannot speculate that the learner is naughty, lazy or troublesome. I have to trace back to where the child comes from to get to the core and find out why he behaves that way' and 'behaviourist theorists believe that the environment plays a major role in a person's life. If a learner is withdrawn or abusive, for example, it is possible that events in her past have made her behave like this. It will be wrong for teachers to pass negative criticism. We have to find the events that made her behave in that way'. Participants were demonstrating that they recognised the need to reflect before acting, they understood

Giroux's (2009) contention that classrooms could not operate on a set of pre-determined rules, and they realised the need to know who their learners were.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	51	5	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	4	51	1
12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	3	5	48

### **Theme 2: Responses to the text as a means to understand participants: Table J**

To aid triangulation, questions 10, 11 and 12 of the student evaluations were asked to determine engagement with issues in the text. The findings of the questions, presented in table form, indicated that most participants felt strongly that the novel contained important issues, and that these issues were broached through a study of the novel (Question 10) and the observations and written work confirmed the student evaluation responses. While the majority of participants agreed that the writing tasks in pairs and groups assisted their thinking about issues, the level of agreement was indicated by 'agree' and not 'strongly agree' (Question 11). Participants were possibly not convinced of the advantages of the method of writing to explore ideas or, perhaps, the questions asked did not challenge their thinking sufficiently. Participants generally were ambivalent about the ability of the lectures to show participants how to make learners grow. A large majority indicated that they were 'unsure' about the capacity of the lectures to enable learners' growth (Question 12). The researcher had to consider how to make explicit the ability of lectures to help learners to grow. It was possible that the researcher assumed unfairly that participants would work out how to apply information explored in the lectures to their classrooms.

#### **5.2.2.3. Theme 3: Notions of teacher identities**

The notions of teacher identities, including the concept of change agency, were discussed with participants to unpack definitions and clarify understandings. Observations indicated that

many participants initially understood a change agent in the classroom to be a teacher who used innovative teaching methods. Discussions and readings helped participants recognise the role that a change agent could play in a teaching and learning situation. The student evaluations revealed that, by the end of the cycle, all participants strongly believed that the lectures made them think about themselves as teachers and as potential change agents in the classroom, as illustrated in the table below. The findings indicate that the repeated discussions about change agency in a classroom might have inspired participants to see themselves as potential agents of change. It is possible that the overt, explicit teaching about the concept played a role in the results.

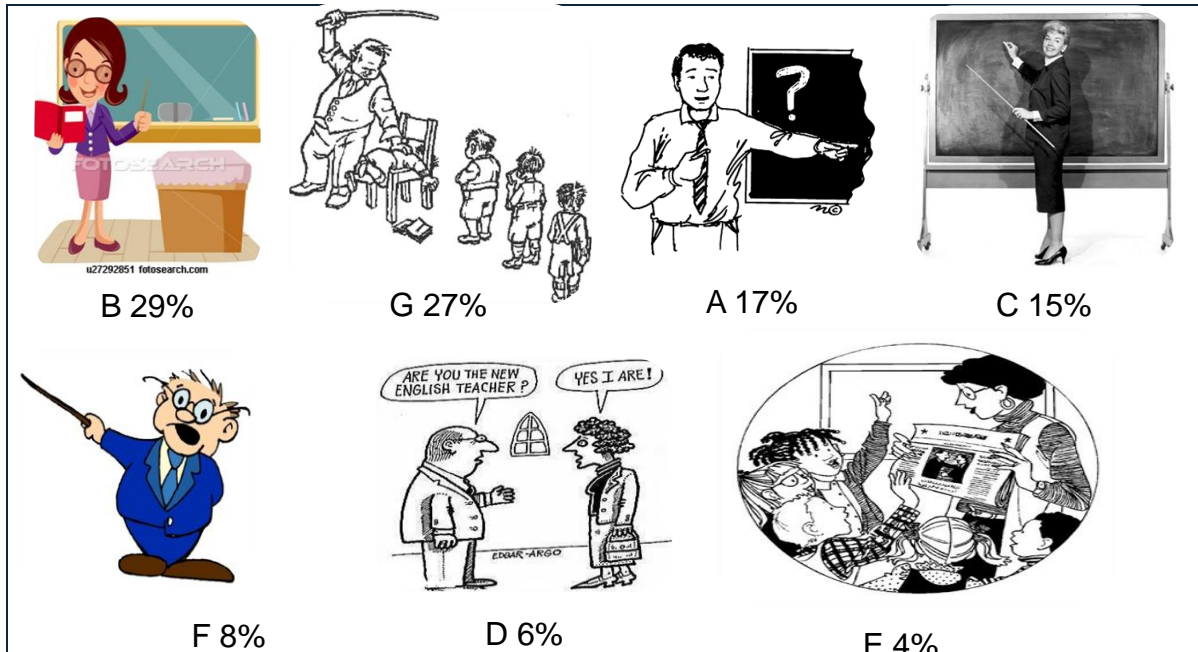
	A: Strongly agree
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	56
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	56

**Theme 3: Notions of teacher identities: Table K**

However, thoughts about identities needed to be further explored and another method of data collection was necessary. Further, as this was the first cycle, it was important to get a clear idea how participants defined themselves and their identities as teachers, and to have a measure against which to compare at the end of the study. Drawings (See Appendix L) were used as a method of identifying participants’ understandings of their identities as teachers. Participants were also asked to identify typical South African teachers. Drawings were chosen to serve as an alternative method of data collection to observations, written work and student evaluations so as to enable triangulation. It was also deemed necessary at this point in the participatory action research to understand how participants perceived the teacher that they would most like to become. It was also important to know how participants viewed current teachers’ identities. If practising teachers were viewed positively and as those making a difference to learners’ lives, then the participants in the study would have role models to emulate. If practising teachers were seen negatively, then the study had to define and identify what made a teacher an effective, engaged teacher of literature who made a difference to learners’ lives and who served as agents of change in his/her classrooms.

Participants were provided with seven drawings of teachers and were asked to identify, with reasons, which type of teacher was the most realistic depiction of South African teachers, and which type of teacher they would most like to be. Some participants chose more than one

option. The table indicates the choices from the most popular choice to the least popular choice in response to the question, which type of teacher, (A) – (G), is the most realistic depiction of South African teachers? The data revealed that there was no clear majority choice for the illustration that participants considered the most realistic depiction of South African teachers.



**The most realistic depiction of South African teachers: Figure D**

While 29% of the 58 participants regarded B (Teacher with red book n.d.) as an accurate representation of South African teachers, 27% believed G (Teacher administering corporal punishment n.d.) to be a truthful portrayal. Of the 29 % who chose B, the vast majority recognised her as an ineffective teacher who provided ‘teacher-centred lessons’; ‘talked too much’; was ‘boring and unimaginative’; appeared ‘unprepared for lessons’; and ‘did not encourage learner participation and interaction’. However, even though she was perceived to be ineffective as a teacher, she did appear to be ‘happy and energetic’; was ‘enthusiastic’; and ‘drove learners crazy trying to be their best friend’. Thus, participants recognised an ineffective teacher as someone who failed to engage learners actively in lessons.

Of concern was the 27% who recognised illustration G as a realistic depiction of South African teachers. Teacher G is administering corporal punishment to learners, a practice that is forbidden by law in South Africa. Participants described Teacher G as ‘short-tempered’; ‘violent’; ‘feared’; ‘dictatorial’; ‘unprofessional’; ‘authoritarian’; ‘abusive’; and ‘brutal’. Participants suggested that such a teacher was probably ‘a drunk’; or was ‘angry with the

world'. They also believed the teacher had 'serious internal issues with himself'; had 'a closed mind'; 'openly bucked school rules'; 'gained the attention of learners through fear and intimidation'; had 'lost control of all teaching skills'; and was 'incapable of motivating learners'. A participant surmised that the teacher was 'old' and 'probably spent decades teaching'; another believed the teacher used corporal punishment 'to keep the power'. A participant noted that 'using corporal punishment does not make a child any more intelligent. In fact, the opposite occurs because it destroys the learner's love of learning and coming to class'. Finally, a participant exclaimed, 'My goodness, what a shame. This is not a teacher!' (participant's punctuation). Participants recognised that Teacher G was behaving in a manner that was illegal and contrary to the norms expected of a teacher. He was identified as an unprofessional teacher who lacked teaching and learning skills, and who needed to enact hegemonic practices in order to control his learners. He was also characterised as having problems in his personal life. The fact that participants identified Teacher G as someone who had been teaching for a long time implied that participants probably experienced older teachers inflicting corporal punishment on learners or they believed that older teachers would use such practices. Even though other illustrations depict teachers who are 'old', this is the only illustration that elicited such a response.

To summarise, over half the participants recognised South African teachers as being inefficient. While some identified South African teachers as having pleasant personalities and high energy levels, the others believed that teachers were unprepared and boring, and whose lessons were teacher-centred and unimaginative. A significant number also believed that South African teachers were recognised by their use of corporal punishment. Participants in cycle one of this study were two years away from joining the teaching profession. They would be entering the profession with very low expectations and opinions of their colleagues. It then became important to ask where such perceptions emanated from – own experiences, the media, other - and whether the study would produce teachers who were different from the two types of teachers recognised as typical of South African teachers.

The other options had relatively small numbers of participants who considered them as representative of South African teachers. Teachers A (Teacher with question mark on chalkboard n.d.) and C (Teacher writing on chalkboard with suit and high heels n.d.) were considered realistic depictions of South African teachers by 17 % and 16 % of participants respectively. Teacher A had a more or less equal number of participants who viewed him positively as those who viewed him negatively. Those who recognised him as an effective

teacher believed he was a ‘democratic teacher’ who ‘allowed for learner participation’; ‘asked learners questions’; ‘promoted thinking’; and enabled a ‘learner-centred lesson’. By all accounts, Teacher A was recognised as an effective teacher.

Those who identified him as an ineffective teacher noted that he was ‘probably unprepared’; ‘unsure of his content’; ‘aggressive’; and ‘boring’. He ‘put learners on the spot’; he used a ‘monotonous voice’; seemed ‘not to enjoy his work’ and behaved as if he were ‘forced to become a teacher’. While some participants believed he was holding a piece of chalk in his right hand, many thought he was holding his tie which they believed revealed he was shy and insecure. Many participants also believed his lessons were teacher-centred using the ‘chalk and talk’ method. Finally, a participant judged that the teacher ‘lacked energy’ and another noted that the teacher seemed to be ‘a true representative of South African teachers – laidback and dictating’. While the researcher interpreted the statement to mean the teacher was relaxed but dominating, the participants who verified the analysis and interpretations indicated that ‘he was just plain lazy’ and ‘he was laidback because he didn’t care’. If participants had a poor impression of teachers, then the study needed to understand why teachers were considered ‘lazy’ and why they appeared not to care. More importantly, how was the group going to ensure that they did not imbibe the culture of being lazy or not caring or any other negative quality that they associated with ineffective teaching?

Like Teacher A, Teacher C was considered effective by some participants and ineffective by others. She was considered effective because she ‘could use both teacher-centred and learner-centred methods’; was ‘confident’; ‘vibrant’; ‘assertive’; ‘friendly’; ‘organised’; ‘professional’; ‘well-presented’; and ‘prepared’, and seemed to ‘enjoy her work’. She ‘engaged and involved learners’; ‘communicated well’ with her classes; was ‘articulate’; and ‘listened to what they said and then wrote down their feedback’. Participants noted that while Teacher C was ‘strict’ and ‘traditional’, she was also ‘welcoming’ and ‘approachable’. Thus, like Teacher A, Teacher C was recognised as an effective teacher by some participants.

Participants who recognised Teacher C as ineffective noted that she was ‘boring’, and ‘unapproachable’. Participants believed that her lessons were ‘teacher-centred’ using ‘just chalk and talk’, and she was a ‘strict disciplinarian’ who ‘used her stick for punishment’. She was seen to ‘expect learners to soak up her words and give them back to her in tests’ and was identified as ‘rigid’ in that, while her lesson plans were good, she ‘could not digress to accommodate changes in her classrooms’. Two participants summed up the teacher by noting,

‘The only word I can think of to describe her is fake. Her smile seems forced and that stick is scary. As a learner in her class, I probably would never answer a question willingly’ and ‘she is smiling yet is carrying a stick’. Finally, some participants focussed on the teacher’s looks and noted that she was ‘obsessed with her looks’ and was ‘in love with the idea of teaching and shaping young minds, but in reality she was a poor teacher who cared more about her looks than her learners’ involvement’. Thus, many negative perceptions of Teacher C emerged.

Teachers F (Teacher in blue suit carrying stick n.d.), D (Teacher with poor grammar, n.d.) and E (Teacher talking to children around her n.d.) were seen as least representative of South African teachers. Teacher F (8%) was seen as ‘authoritarian’, ‘traditional’, and ‘incompetent’. Participants believed that his ‘lesson plans were set in stone’ and his lessons were ‘teacher-centred’ where learners were ‘fed information’. Teacher F’s stick was identified as a tool of ‘control’ to ‘intimidate and frighten learners’, and he was recognised as ‘a teacher no one liked’. Thus, Teacher F was defined as someone who was inflexible and controlling, and who banked information into learners (Freire 1970). Teacher D (6%) was recognised as a teacher who could not speak English properly. Participants surmised that she was ‘unqualified’ or ‘under qualified’; and she ‘probably did not complete her schooling or had a really bad teacher herself’. She was identified as ‘unskilled’; ‘unfit to be an English teacher’; and would ‘contaminate and destroy learners’. Participants’ comments indicated that they were probably aware of the large number of unqualified or under-qualified teachers in South Africa (CDE 2011). Further, they deduced from her poor grammar that she was poorly taught and thus imbibed the speech and practices of her teachers. In addition, they believed that Teacher D would herself prove detrimental to her learners. Thus, participants clearly understood that the quality of a teacher determined the worth of a learner’s education.

Participants saw teacher E (4%) most positively and yet she received the lowest score, implying that very few participants recognised South African teachers as effective teachers. Teacher E’s classroom was identified as having ‘learner interaction and participation’; ‘open communication’; and ‘active learning’. The lessons were ‘creative’; the teacher ‘addressed issues as they emerged’; and ‘promoted critical thinking’. Teacher E ‘respected learners’ opinions’; used ‘various innovative methods’; employed ‘real and relevant resources’; and ‘made use of newspapers to keep learners abreast of current issues’. A participant noted that her lessons would be ‘fun, exciting, enjoyable, active and noisy - as a lesson should be’. Thus, participants recognised a successful teacher as being effective and engaging in the classroom

and one who confronted issues that emerged in her lessons using both novel and critical means.

Participants also ascribed characteristics to her personality by noting that she was ‘an excellent teacher’ who was also ‘friendly’; ‘enthusiastic’; ‘motivated’; ‘dedicated’; ‘accommodating’; ‘organised’; and who ‘loved her job’. Teacher E ‘went the extra mile’ in her ‘democratic’ classroom; she ‘loved and cared for her learners’ and she listened to them. Learners, in turn, ‘loved her’ and were ‘happy and enthusiastic’ in her classroom. If this teacher was an example of someone least likely to be found in a South African classroom, then such classrooms were poorer for it. However, if participants recognised this teacher as effective, then they had a positive frame of reference from which to draw.

Participants were also asked which type of teacher they would most like to be. Some participants selected more than one choice. The findings are presented below and are then analysed. The table indicates the choices from the most popular choice to the least popular choice in response to the question, which type of teacher, (A) – (G), would you most like to be. No participant chose options D, F and G, identified as ineffective teachers by participants in the previous question.



E: 92%



A: 6%



B: 4%



C: 2%

**The teacher I would most like to be: Figure E**

Teacher E was identified as the teacher that the vast majority of participants chose as the type of teacher they would most like to be. And yet they believed that she was the teacher least likely to be found in South Africa. Participants were thus indicating that they believed that the typical South African teacher was ineffective; they were also revealing that they had very clear ideas about the type of teacher that they wanted to become. With some clear ideas about whom they considered effective and ineffective teachers, participants could embark on the process of becoming agents of change in their classrooms.

### 5.2.3. Reflections and decisions made

Before reflecting on cycle one, the researcher pointed out to participants something that was noted during the observations - in the lecture-room and during tutorials, participants sat, in most instances, in racial groups. While they appeared comfortable interacting across racial lines, they nevertheless chose to sit with people of their own races. Participants responded that they were 'comfortable with our friends'. In some tutorials, the researcher asked participants to work with people they had not worked with before and participants, in the main, appeared to work well with people other than their friends. However, a participant revealed, 'I don't like working with some students. They act like we're not there'. The fact that a participant could articulate a feeling of being disrespected and ignored had to be discussed. When the researcher asked who 'we' referred to, no-one in the class responded. Thus, many deep-seated concerns of participants were not being articulated. While participants did not react to the participant's comment, it was just as revealing that participants did not challenge the comment or express surprise at hearing it. However, participants did reveal that they mixed with people of their own races during breaks and when having lunch. A participant noted, 'It's a language thing. When we meet, we need to speak a language that we're comfortable with and that we can understand'. While the comfort of speaking a common language was understandable, it needed to be addressed. The fact that participants could not and did not articulate perceptions of racial tensions meant that such tensions needed to be actively challenged in the following cycles.

If the study was to consider issues of race, class, gender and identity, among others, then discussions around the issues needed to mirror the actions and behaviours of participants. If the study was to have an emancipatory, empowering agenda, it had to emancipate and empower all participants by drawing their attention to their own behaviour and how the behaviour could potentially be defying their own words. Further, participants needed to acknowledge that their behaviour could be reproduced in their own classrooms and thus they would be perpetuating discrimination and prejudice, behaviour that this study seeks to highlight and change. Participants were reminded of Lewin's (1951) change model, which identified what Lewin referred to as the unfreezing stage to be the first step in making changes. During the unfreezing stage, the existing behaviour needs to be identified and moved towards change. The participants recognised that the lack of mixing, shying away from confronting racial tensions, and perceptions by some participants that they were being disrespected, needed to be actively addressed in the following cycle.

When participants reflected on these observations and on the earlier findings, they identified how intolerant many participants appeared to be. A participant reflected, 'It looks like we are so narrow-minded'. However, a participant stated, 'I don't have patience with issues I know are wrong. So judge me'. Despite varying views, the group initially agreed to focus on issues of tolerance and resilience in the following cycle. A participant suggested, 'Aren't agents of change kind people first? Let's add kindness or something like that to the mix'. Thus, participants determined to identify how teachers of literature could use literary texts to interrogate issues of tolerance, resilience and kindness, and apply those issues in their classrooms.

When participants were told that they were to do a film study in cycle two, many indicated a measure of concern. They noted that they were not comfortable with film and needed information on how to read and teach a film. At this point, the researcher realised that she had very little information on participants' film study histories or even on their responses to films in general. The group agreed that prior to cycle two, a film study questionnaire would be administered (See Appendix N).

For the researcher, it was important to reflect on her own shortcomings and concerns. Since some participants refrained from active participation in the lectures, the researcher was unable to comprehend their levels of understanding. Thus, the researcher had to find non-threatening ways to ensure comfortable participation for all participants. She also had to highlight inconsistencies in what participants articulated and what they did, and challenge them to confront stereotypes and their own biases. Even more important was the need to explore why participants chose to avoid confronting racist behaviour. While they probably could not relate to the struggles under apartheid, they were, nevertheless, victims of the long-term impacts of apartheid. It was possible that participants were weary of an over-emphasis of apartheid history that characterised their schooling. It was also important for the researcher to challenge participants' perceived acceptance that corporal punishment was the norm in many schools. Overall, the researcher was aware that the participants were reflecting on her words and actions and she needed to present herself in a way with which she was both comfortable and proud.

Of greater importance was the researcher's concern that she was imposing her values on the participants. The researcher chose readings and prompted discussions, and could therefore support and privilege issues that were important to her. The researcher and participants

interrogated the concern and resolved to make choices based on the best interests of participants’ future learners. While the researcher committed herself to being aware of her potential power over participants, participants also resolved to be aware of instances of such hegemonic practices.

### 5.3. Cycle two

#### 5.3.1. Participants’ profiles

Cycle two saw a drop in the number of participants taking the English Education module. This is normal as some students take the module as an elective. The trend in the demographics of the group was similar to those of the first semester with the group having a predominantly female presence and with more than half the participants listing English as their home language, as seen in the tables that follow.

English Education Major 320: Semester 2: 52 students

Race

Indian	African	White	Coloured	Other
27	19	4	1	1
51,92%	36,54%	7,69%	1,92%	1,92%

Gender

Female	Male
41	11
78,85%	21,15%

Home Language

English	IsiZulu	South Sotho	Xhosa	North Sotho
33	16	2	0	1
63,46%	30,77%	3,85%	0%	1,92%

Age

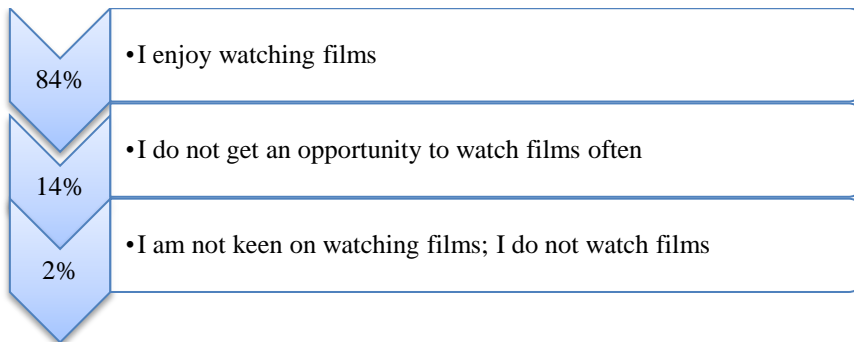
Age	Number of students
20 - 29	46
30 -37	6

**Race, gender, home language, age: Table L**

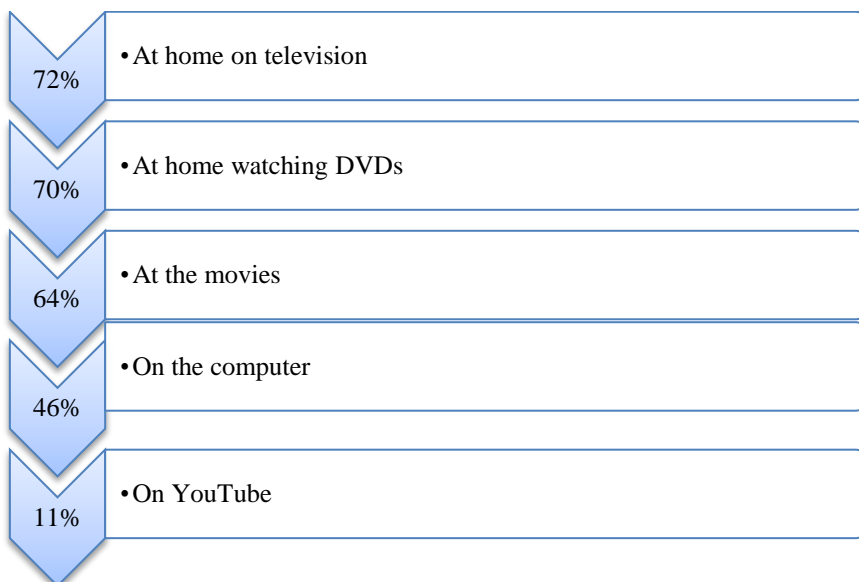
**5.3.2. Baseline information: Film questionnaires to participants: Findings and interpretations**

Prior to starting cycle two, a film study questionnaire (See Appendix N) was administered to participants to understand their film histories, according to the decisions taken at the end of cycle one. The findings of the discrete questions are presented below (from the most popular choice to the least popular choice) and then analysed and interpreted. Thereafter, analysis and interpretation of answers to the open-ended questions are presented.

Question 1: Please tick the answer that applies to you:



Question 2: Where do you watch films? You may tick as many as apply to you.



**Enjoyment of and access to films: Table M**

Question 4: At school, did you watch films as part of your English classes?



Question 5: At school, did you watch films as part of any other subject?



Question 6: At school, did you watch films as a treat or to keep you occupied?



Question 8: At school, were you ever taught how to read a film?



**Films at school: Figure F**

Question 7: What types of films do you enjoy? You may tick as many as apply to you.

Comedy	89%
Romance	79%
Drama	65%
Thriller	38%
Historical	33%
Epics	25%
Political drama	21%
Other (please specify) Horror	13%
Other (please specify) Action	6%
Other (please specify) Fantasy	4%
Other (please specify) Suspense; Animation; Sci-fi; Documentaries; Musicals; Dance movies; Teenage movies; Spiritual/ religious films; Short films	2%

**Types of films enjoyed: Table N**

What emerged from the discrete questions of the film study questionnaire was that the majority of participants enjoyed watching films and most of them watched films on television or from a DVD, with a relatively large number (64%) going to the movies. In terms of their exposure to films at school, more than half the participants (54%) did not watch films as part of their English classes, a significant number (70%) did not watch films as part of any other

subject, over half (52%) did not watch films as a treat or to keep them occupied, and a majority of participants (79%) were not taught how to analyse a film. Participants enjoyed a wide range of films with comedies, romances and dramas being most popular. Cycle two of the study commenced with the knowledge that most participants enjoyed watching films and thus watching the film, *The Colour of Paradise*, would be perceived positively. However, having very little exposure to film study at school and not having been taught how to read films meant that the study had to introduce the film and film studies at a fairly basic level.

Participants were also asked four open-ended questions. The first open-ended question was: Is there anything you do not like when watching films? (Question 3). The most repeated answer was disturbances in the form of people talking during a film or taking calls on their cellphones. When the film *The Colour of Paradise* was screened for participants, they all agreed to refrain from speaking during the film and they agreed to turn off their cellphones. Other repeated answers to Question 3 were violence, blood, nudity, sex scenes and obscene language. Some participants pointed to difficult language and the use of sub-titles. The concern about subtitles, while not identified by all participants, was the issue about which most participants expressed concern when told they were to study a film that had sub-titles. However, many participants acknowledged that they had not watched a film with sub-titles before.

Further responses to Question 3 included, 'I don't like it when I cannot relate to the film' and 'I do not like a film when I am able to relate to the sad things in it'. While three participants identified difficult plot lines, two others identified 'simplistic plot lines'. Three participants pointed out the film genres they did not like (horror, science fiction, musicals), and three participants noted either 'disappointing endings' or 'predictable endings'. Four participants indicated that they did not like films based on books because 'vital information is usually left out' and two did not like looking for 'hidden meanings'. Finally, one participant noted, 'I don't like being told about a film or reading about it before watching it. It's then an anticlimax for me' and another pointed out, 'I like enjoying a film, not analysing and dissecting it'. The last comment was used as a catalyst by the researcher and a challenge was issued to the participants: 'Let's see if we can analyse, dissect and still enjoy the film'. Participants agreed to accept the challenge.

The second open-ended question was: What would you like to get out of your film study course in your English Education major module at university? (Question 9). While five

participants left the question unanswered, the vast majority of participants noted that they wanted to be able to ‘interpret’; ‘analyse’; ‘understand’; ‘review’; and ‘read’ films. Others pointed out that they wanted to improve their visual literacy skills and become critical evaluators of films. Many participants wanted the module to teach them about the elements of film such as cinematography, point of view, script writing, dialogue, characters, lighting, costumes, sound and music, directing skills, and ‘what goes into making a film’. As one participant noted, ‘I want to know how to produce my own film. I want to know how the making of the film affects the meaning of the film’.

Other participants considered the use of film in schools, including ‘how to teach film’; how to ‘use films as a resource as a language teacher’; ‘how to engage learners in film study’; and ‘how to use films to improve and optimise classroom learning’. Finally, a participant wanted the ‘ability to create awareness of issues in learners’ and another wanted to know ‘how to use films to teach values and morals’. Since most of the responses from the participants were going to be addressed in the lectures, participants were assured that their concerns would be attended to. The only comment that was not to be given prominence in cycle two was ‘how to produce my own film’. The researcher planned to mention the process briefly, but participants were told that there would be opportunities to focus on aspects of film production in cycles three, four and five, should participants need them.

In response to the question: What types of films would you like us to study? (Question 10), most participants identified a film genre that they would like to study with comedies being most popular followed by dramas, historical films, romances, political dramas, epics, thrillers, sci-fi, and musicals (one participant noted ‘anything but comedy’ and another stated, ‘avoid comedies –they have hidden meanings’). Others named films – *Pursuit of Happiness*; *Lord of the Flies*; *Mosquito Coast*; *Avatar*; *Pride and Prejudice*; *To Kill a Mockingbird*; and *Slumdog Millionaire*. Four participants wanted films of novels, three suggested South African films, and six participants suggested a film of a Shakespearean play, with suggestions of *Othello* and *Twelfth Night* emerging as possibilities (one participant noted ‘Not Shakespeare’).

Participants suggested studying ‘contemporary’ films; ‘films that relate to us’; and films that ‘we can relate to’. Finally, participants suggested films that were ‘relevant to South Africa’; that provided ‘insight into important issues’; that ‘critique issues’; that ‘inspire and teach lessons’; and that ‘entertain while teaching’. What the data revealed was that participants had varying tastes. It was therefore doubtful if the film chosen for study in cycle two would please

all participants. However, the film was a contemporary drama, and it had the potential to provide insights into important issues, inspire and teach lessons, and entertain while teaching.

The final open-ended question was: What type of films do you consider suitable to teach at school? (Question 11). Like their responses to Question 10, many participants identified the genres that would be most suitable for learners at school. The most popular genre was historical films, followed by dramas, political dramas, comedies, epics, teenage movies and suspense. Significantly, while the majority of participants asked to study comedies in their English Education module, very few believed that learners in classrooms should study comedies. Similarly, while historical films was found to be the third most popular genre to study at university, historical films was found to be participants' first choice to teach to learners. Thus participants were indicating that films that they enjoyed would not be the ones that learners should watch.

They also suggested films that would be suitable for learners such as *Cry, the Beloved Country*; *Tsotsi*; *2012: The Day after Tomorrow*; *Dead Poets' Society*; and *Remember the Titans*. Participants also recommended that learners watch films based on novels and Shakespearean plays and some suggested *Romeo and Juliet*; *Hamlet*; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other participants noted that films should be 'educational'; 'should deal with current issues'; 'should inspire learners, motivate them and build confidence'; and should 'teach a lesson - but not propaganda'. While it was important that participants recognised the need to use films to make a difference to learners' lives, it was equally important that at least one participant recognised the potential of films to serve propagandist agendas.

There were also suggestions that films be age appropriate and not contain 'violence'; 'nudity'; 'sexual scenes'; and 'any messages that could offend learners'. Finally, participants pointed out that the choice of films should be based on what learners would enjoy and find 'interesting and fun'. The questionnaire was able to provide insights into participants' film histories and informed how cycle two proceeded. It also allowed the participants to recognise that knowledge was grounded in their experiences, as espoused by Giroux (2009).

### **5.3.3. Engagement with *The Colour of Paradise* by Majid Majidi (2000)**

The purpose of cycle two was to consider Iranian filmmaker, Majid Majidi's film *The Colour of Paradise* through an introduction to film theory, and by using various literary theories - reader/ viewer response, marxist and feminist - to unpack the issues that emerged from the film. The lectures, which ran over two weeks, focussed on the plot, the characters and

relationships, and the issues that emerged from the film such as spirituality, kindness and unkindness, the importance of the senses, gratitude and ingratitude, the quest for knowledge, tolerance and resilience. It also grappled with film terminology such as cinematography, setting, pace, music and soundtrack, imagery, scenes and dialogue. Participants finally considered the impact of non-actors in the film and the experience of watching a film with English sub-titles.

Participants were then asked to consider how to engage with the film using different teaching and learning strategies that participants could use in their classrooms. Two film viewings were set up for participants outside lecture hours and the film was made available in the library should participants want to view it. During the lectures, clips from the film were used to initiate discussion, various critiques of the film were interrogated, and like in cycle one, participants worked individually, in pairs and in groups.

In the two sets of lectures, the concept ‘agent of change’ was considered in terms of the film, and participants discussed and then wrote out responses to a question related to change agency.

### **5.3.4. Data collection, findings and interpretations**

Cycle two used a focus group (See Appendix I), written work, and student evaluations (See Appendix O) to identify participants’ responses to the interventions. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the various data collection methods: Effectiveness of strategies used in lectures; Speaking to the issues; and Teachers as agents of change.

#### **5.3.4.1. Theme 1: Effectiveness of strategies used in lectures**

Findings for theme 1 emerged from student evaluations and the focus group. The evaluations indicated that they all strongly believed that the lecturer was well-prepared (Question 1), presented clear and well-delivered lectures (Question 2), asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7), and had a good relationship with the class (Question 9). In many ways, this finding replicated those of cycle one, except that in cycle one, some participants did not feel as strongly that the lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7). The finding of cycle two thus indicated that either the lecturer was doing a better job of promoting discussion, or participants felt more comfortable with the process of interaction and the strategy of questioning and class discussions. In the student evaluations, most participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the language of the lecturer

(Question 3), they believed that the lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated their enthusiasm for the subject (Question 4), they believed that they knew how to implement the strategies in classrooms (Question 6), and they enjoyed the lectures (Question 15). These responses echo those of cycle one, indicating a level of confidence in their understanding and ability to apply their knowledge.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
1. The lecturer was well prepared.	48		
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	48		
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	46	2	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	40	8	
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	4	4	40
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	8	40	
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	48		
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	2	41	5
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	48		
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	44	4	

**Theme 1: Effectiveness of strategies used in lectures: Table O**

In contrast to the answers to Question 6 (I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom) in the student evaluations, the focus group discussions indicated that participants revealed a level of uncertainty. Comments such as ‘I know what to do but whether I do it successfully is another thing’; ‘In some classrooms, the kids are ridiculous. Naughty and full of it. I just hope I get a decent school. Otherwise, forget creative ways and methods’; and ‘I’m going to try to be innovative, if I can’ indicated a lack of confidence in their abilities and yet their comments revealed that they had a clear understanding of the contexts in which they would work.

In cycle one the majority of participants indicated, in the student evaluations, an uncertainty about their levels of comfort with participating in class (Question 8); in cycle two the majority indicated a level of comfort with class participation with five participants still being uncertain.

During the focus group discussions, many participants indicated that they were very comfortable talking in the English Education lecture-room with one participant saying, ‘This is the only class I talk in. I would die if I had to say anything anywhere, you know, in other lecturer’s lectures’. When asked why she believed this was so, she answered, ‘You know how you say, “Try. Get it wrong” You know what I mean. You get us to try and no one laughs if it’s not right’. Another participant quipped, ‘We wouldn’t dare to laugh at others in your class’. A third participant pointed out, ‘In other lectures, you just try to answer and sometimes, if it’s wrong, people find it funny. They’re stupid like that’. The comments indicated that participants experienced a sense of trust and respect among the other participants. The lecture-room was thus perceived to be a safe place for participants to share their views. In some ways, the researcher aimed to take up Boler’s (2004) suggestion that, for learning to take place, spaces have to be created for all voices, including those that are marginalised and silenced, to participate with respect.

Of greatest concern was the response to Question 5 (The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text). In cycle one, a majority indicated a positive response to the question; in cycle two, the majority were uncertain or not sure how they felt. As the cycle dealt with film study, it was possible that participants needed much more scaffolded teaching and learning to successfully understand the text. Scaffolding refers to an expert providing instructional support that facilitates learning when students are first introduced to a new subject (Vygotsky 1987). The film studies questionnaire administered at the beginning of the cycle indicated that the majority of participants had very little exposure to film study at school and had not been taught how to read a film. The researcher needed to perhaps use strategies that assisted participants to access the text more easily. Thus, while participants enjoyed the lectures and found them interesting, felt comfortable to participate in lectures, and believed that they would be able to implement the strategies in their own classrooms, they were not sure if the strategies used helped them to understand the text.

The focus group helped to understand the finding. While participants believed that they could implement group, pair and class discussions in their own classrooms and could use articles and film clips to teach their own learners, they were still not confident in their abilities to read films themselves. A participant noted, ‘I know this film and can read and analyse it. What happens with another film? Can I do it?’ Another added, ‘She’s saying, can I apply the rules? Can I do it by myself? It’s scary to think, “I have to do this solo”. And what if I get it wrong? I mess up a child’s whole life. Okay, not life, but you know what I mean. It’s very

frightening'. Participants' lack of confidence in applying their knowledge to other contexts and films was evident. They also revealed that they believed there were certain 'rules' that needed to be applied.

Finally, the majority of responses in both the student evaluations and the focus group discussions indicated that participants enjoyed the interventions experienced in the two cycles, found them useful and they believed that they would be able to implement them in their own classrooms - 'I know that if I use these ideas in my classroom, I will be a fairly good teacher'. Most participants also pointed out that a teacher had to be prepared - 'you know, you knew what you were going to do, like the order of things, and what you needed, like resources and all that'. One participant did point out that she was feeling a little nervous about coping in her own classroom - 'How do you know if you're doing it right? This is for every single day, your whole life. What if it doesn't get easier?' Another asked, 'What if I can't find resources?' In the focus group discussion, a participant stated that she wanted other, more innovative methods to engage with literary texts - 'I want to be wow. Learners must want to be in my class and have a really good time and learn easily. And I want to have fun too. Like you, you just seem to relax and flow with the class and you make us laugh. Like cool. So I'm asking for other things. I don't know if I'm making sense'. Thus, while participants believed that they had some ideas on how to succeed in their classrooms, they also revealed a sense of anxiety about coping in the classroom, of not knowing whether they were succeeding or not, and of finding relevant resources. The final comment by the participant who wanted 'to be wow' was a plea for more innovative, creative strategies to enable an enjoyable lesson for everyone involved in the classroom.

#### 5.3.4.2. Theme 2: Speaking to the issues

Questions 10, 11 and 12 of the student evaluations dealt with addressing issues in the text. The findings of the questions related to the theme are presented in table form, and thereafter the findings are analysed.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	25	23	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	4	44	

12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	3	2	43
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### Theme 2: Speaking to the issues: Table P

The student evaluations indicated that the participants either felt strongly or very strongly that important issues were raised through the study of the film (Question 10). In the focus group, while two participants found the film slow, they all indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed the film and would consider teaching it in their classrooms. Their reasons included the ‘important issues in the film like being grateful for what you have’; ‘the role of God or spirit or creation or whatever’; and ‘the ingratitude or self-centredness of people like the father who made everything about me, me, me’. A participant did ask, ‘Would second-language learners cope? They have to read the subtitles throughout. Can be tough’. It was important that participants were not only thinking about texts that could be used in their classrooms but were assessing the effectiveness of the texts for their potential classrooms and learners.

The student evaluations showed that, like in cycle one, the majority of participants believed that the writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to their thinking, and like in cycle one, the level of agreement was indicated by agree not strongly agree (Question 11). While participants believed that the writing tasks were helpful, they were not convinced how advantageous they were as tools to aid thinking. Participants were asked to write out answers to the following question:

*Is Hashem a good father? Provide reasons for your answer. [This question is to be discussed as a group. Thereafter, you are to write an answer on your own. Your answer will be collected].*

The group discussions prior to writing their answers revealed varying responses with some participants condemning Hashem for his callous treatment of his son and with others understanding why he behaved the way he did, with a participant noting that ‘he’s a good father. He gives them food and a house’. The written work, too, revealed the same pattern of contrasting responses. Participants wrote, ‘I can understand Hashem and I think he is a good father’; ‘He is a working man who can’t be focussed solely on his son’; ‘He may appear to be unkind but is he really? He lost his wife and had to raise three children alone. Then throw in the additional prospect of one of the children being blind. Doesn’t he deserve to feel angry, upset, disheartened?’; ‘He is confused about how to behave’; ‘How can a father be ashamed of his son?’; ‘He is typical of so many people who worry about what others will say’; and ‘He

puts himself before his child’. The comments revealed that participants were considering issues and characters from various, alternative angles, and that many of them were able to experience empathy by putting themselves in another’s shoes. They were thus judging events and choices in the film, and were considering the multiple perspectives in the film (Ciardiello 2004). Of concern were the many responses that seemed to indicate that Hashem’s behaviour was acceptable ‘because men behave that way’ and ‘you can’t expect a man to get all soft’. Thus while participants did not always agree with Hashem’s actions, they accepted and understood them because he was a man. The comments revealed that the largely female class had participants who had accepted and were themselves perpetuating patriarchy.

As in the first cycle, the answers to Question 12 in the student evaluations indicated that participants were unsure about the ability of the lectures to show participants how to make learners grow. The researcher asked the focus group the question: How can you use the text to help your learners develop academically and socially? While starting tentatively, participants did find answers – ‘Talk to them about the issues and problems in the film?’; ‘Get them talking among themselves and then discuss, share opinions, even debate’; ‘What about questions to them to make them think?’; ‘Basically, they have to make sense of the issues in the film and then relate those issues to their own lives and to the world’. Finally, a participant stated, ‘I just thought of something. If we want learners to develop in their school work and in the world, you know, socially, I have to know them. So, first, find out about them. Ask them about their lives, and then build from there. You can’t build on something you don’t know’. Thus, while student evaluations revealed uncertainty about whether the lectures showed participants how to make their learners grow, when persuaded to think about the question, focus group participants were able to consider possible answers. It was realised that lectures needed to be more explicit in pointing out to participants exactly how to use texts to help learners develop academically and socially, and to enable greater discussion on the topic.

**5.3.4.3. Theme 3: Teachers as agents of change**

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	18	30
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	7	41

**Theme 3: Teachers as agents of change: Table Q**

Student evaluations, a written task and the focus group considered the theme, teachers as agents of change. While the student evaluations revealed that all participants believed that the lectures made them think about themselves as teachers and as potential change agents in the classroom, the intensity of belief was less than that of cycle one. While no participant disagreed with the statements and no one indicated that s/he was neutral or unsure, the finding revealed that participants were not as convinced of the ability of the lectures and, by implication, the lecturer to make them think about themselves as teachers and as change agents. It is possible that cycle one's emphasis on explicit discussions and readings on the topic made participants able to relate to and accept the concept more readily. Thus, returning to an explicit discussion of change agency needed to be used in the next cycle.

The focus group also addressed the theme of change agency and found that all members of the focus group believed that they would be agents of change in their classrooms. When asked how they would achieve it, they noted that they would 'make a difference'; they would be 'good teachers'; they would 'be exciting and innovative'; they would 'make them critical thinkers'; and they would 'really tackle issues head on'. When probed into how this process would unfold, there was a level of uncertainty – 'It's hard to explain exactly how, but I know I want to help them realise their potential'. Thus, it was a positive sign that participants were certain that they wanted to serve as agents of change and make a difference to their learners' lives. However, the actual process of implementing the role was still unclear. In addition, some participants believed that being a good, innovative teacher would suffice becoming an agent of change.

Of greatest concern to the researcher was the comment from a participant who stated at the end of the focus group interview, 'I want to be like you – the way you teach and carry yourself'. While lectures were designed to model teaching methods and strategies, the extent of imitation had to be confronted. The participants wanted to become effective, engaged teachers of literature who would use their lessons to help learners grow academically and socially and who would ultimately become agents of change. It was important, therefore, for participants to develop their own identities and be their own persons as they entered their professions. While they could borrow ideas and strategies, they needed to develop their identities more authentically. Freire (1970, 202) reminds us that 'educators should never allow their presence to transform the learners' presence into a shadow of the educator's presence' and that the educator 'has to stimulate learners to live a critically conscious

presence in the pedagogical and historical process'. Perhaps, participants were still young in their journeys in becoming agents of change and, thus, imitating whom they perceived to be effective teachers was understandable.

The written task, designed to assess their ability to apply their understandings of change agency to the text, was based on the following question:

*As a teacher, you have to bring about change, you have to make a difference to your learners' lives, you have to make them think critically and you have to help them grow. What aspects of The Colour of Paradise would you focus on to achieve the above aims? [Write out your answer on your own. Answers will be collected].*

This individual task elicited many interesting responses. Participants noted that they would explain to learners that 'even though we may be physically different, we still experience life'; 'in moments of despair, there are some blessings'; 'being different doesn't mean you won't be accepted'; 'you can't give up on your dreams even if your circumstances are not good'; and 'happiness cannot come at the cost of another's happiness'. Other participants identified questions they would pose to learners to make them think critically and help them grow. Such questions included: 'Despite your biases towards others, how would you feel if you were in their situation?'; 'When life gets difficult, how do we cope? Do we just give up or do we find solutions?'; 'Why do we treat people who are different to us differently?'; 'How would you feel if you were blind? How would you feel if you had a blind child?'; and 'How do we deal with challenges in our lives?' Thus, participants were identifying issues of difference, perseverance, acceptance, faith, and empathy to initiate ideas of change in their classrooms.

Others considered making a difference to learners by showing them that 'we have to be open-minded. Narrow views stunt our growth' and 'we need to look at issues from different perspectives in order to get a fair view of the message that is being sent'. A participant focussed on parenting in the South African context by noting, 'In the South African context, many children have good parents. However, many children have no parents or sick parents or absent parents or abusive parents. Children must know what is acceptable and what they need as children. We can understand a parent's attitude and motives, but a child's basic rights and needs have to be respected'. Another participant quoted the country's Bill of Rights with, 'Held in the Bill of Rights is the equality clause and this must be promoted. If any great change is going to take place in our country, we must begin to accept that just because someone is different does not make them any less of a person, whether it's race, religion, gender or disability. I would hold discussions with learners about these issues'. Other

participants highlighted issues of spirituality, nature, blindness, resilience, tolerance, the roles of men and women ('the film made me appreciate my mother and grandmother'), 'stereotypical thinking' and the need to feel empathy ('We don't realise the effects of discrimination unless we have been through it ourselves'). Finally, a participant suggested that 'able-bodied' learners should visit a school for the blind to 'show them that blind learners are just normal kids'. The written task, done in the tutorial and written without prior preparation, elicited responses that indicated that participants had a fairly good idea of how to use the film to develop sensitivity to issues (Henning 1993), and how to start critical engagement with issues of change, making a difference, and helping learners to grow and develop.

### **5.3.5. Reflections and decisions made**

Cycle two reflected a measure of unease with film study. The film study questionnaire had indicated participants' lack of exposure to the field and, in retrospect, perhaps more needed to be done by the researcher to scaffold participants' understanding. Film elements and how films were created to produce meaning should have had extra attention. Participants agreed with the researcher that aspects of film study, including technical aspects of making a film and further strategies to enable ease of analysis, would be introduced into the next cycle focussing on the play, *Sophtown*. As the researcher had a background in film-making, she agreed to use the following cycle to enable greater access to film-making to assist participants to identify how choices made, in creating a film, could impact on the meanings in a film.

With some participants noting that they were insecure about their abilities to prepare for a class, it was decided, with the participants, that in the next cycle, participants would take a more active role by accessing resources, building research skills, and leading the lecture via prepared readings from the play. The researcher also suggested introducing more creative, interactive teaching strategies and to make the strategies more easily apparent to participants.

Finally, participants unanimously decided that the focus on gender and patriarchy needed to be more carefully unpacked in cycle three with an emphasis on how participants accepted and perpetuated patriarchy. In addition, participants' understanding of becoming agents of change needed to be interrogated in terms of their emerging identities in the research process. On a personal note, the researcher identified a sense of trust and respect developing among participants in the way they responded to each other. Participants, too, corroborated this finding, but only when it was pointed out to them.

## 5.4. Cycle three

### 5.4.1. Engagement with *Sophiatown* by The Junction Avenue Theatre Company (1988)

The play *Sophiatown* by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company provided the stimulus for much more engaged teaching and greater confrontation with issues. Working with a three-week cycle, participants analysed the text using new historicist literary theory that focuses on functions and representations of power, and on the way in which power contains subversion, and cultural materialist literary theory that enables the recovering of lost histories and on ways in which defiance, subversion, dissidence, resistance and political opposition are articulated, represented and performed. The text was also analysed using feminist literary theory (discussed in cycle one) and critical literacy which focuses on questioning and challenging the attitudes, values and beliefs in the play.

The lectures focussed on the background history of the place, Sophiatown, including its history, politics, economics, cultural production and sense of community. Participants grappled with Brah's (1996) notion of home and the subjectively experienced processes of inclusion and exclusion. Themes that the group focussed on included united resistance; gangsterism and violence; race and identity; loss; love resisted and love demanded; *shebeens*, gambling and movies; the politics of the time; education; and the power of storytelling. Central to the place, and the play, was the *Drum* generation (*Drum* was a very popular magazine of the time in which the play was set). An important character, who also served as the narrator of the play, Jakes, worked for *Drum* magazine and many issues emanated from that fact. While the play reflected the 1950s, one of many turbulent periods in South Africa's apartheid history, the play was created and staged in the 1980s, also a politically violent era in South Africa. Thus, participants aimed to understand The Junction Avenue Theatre Company, the creators of the play, and their use of the workshop method in the composition process. While the workshop method has limitations and is determined by the cast's composition, capacities and inclinations, it is a more democratic form of creating a play where the group, rather than a director, researches facts from various sources and composes the play collaboratively.

The play was therefore considered as a workshopped play that aimed to reclaim and re-popularise the hidden history of South Africa's struggle. To this end, participants looked at the play as history, memory as history, and the politics of identity in the play. While assessing

the plot, characters, relationships, language (including *tsotsitaal*), motifs, symbols, images, and central concerns and conflicts found in different scenes, participants also actively assessed whether the play was an example of theatre of anger or theatre of reflection. They also considered the staging of the play at every lecture.

The lectures were mediated through various pedagogical tools. Participants read interviews with residents from 1950s Sophiatown who had been forcibly removed from their homes, read the poetry and novels of people affected by the forced removals such as poet, Don Mattera and novelist, Es'kia Mphahlele, were given academic articles to consider, and were asked to source articles about and photographs depicting 1950s Sophiatown. All sources of information were shared and discussed. Certain participants also volunteered to prepare extracts from the play and present dramatic readings of the extracts to the class. In addition, music from 1950s Sophiatown was played in the class, and a digital versatile disk (DVD) was made by the researcher using still pictures and music of the time to understand the era and events of the period. Participants were also shown how to make a simple DVD with still images and music using available computer software. They could thus make their own resources and play it off a laptop or a DVD machine and television when in their own classrooms.

Participants also engaged in storytelling and role-plays based on issues and scenarios in the text to understand events and characters. Participants and the researcher shared stories of removal, loss and oppression, and how they (or their parents) remembered the past, spoke about the past, and what they did in the past. These stories revealed intense insights into their agency or lack of agency both in the past and present (Field 1999). Telling their stories helped to affirm their own histories and voices, and to engage with and interrogate their own experiences (Giroux 2009). It was also an attempt to understand their situations both intellectually and emotionally and even though some stories were incomplete or distorted, each one carried significance and import (Govinden 1996; Mize 2009). Sharing of the role-plays and stories was optional so as not to make participants uncomfortable with presenting before a class and to enable choice and agency in participants' actions in the lecture-room. The researcher, too, used a teacher-in-role strategy to increase participants' knowledge and comprehension of the play and for them to identify and empathise with characters and incidents in the text. The researcher described the scenario,

It is 1952. You are residents of Sophiatown. Some of you go to a university. You are aware of the threat to move residents out of Sophiatown. Prime Minister Strydom is to address you at your university.

The participants explored who Strydom was, who would accompany him, who could attend the university and who could not, and reasons why he would visit the university. The researcher then stated, 'Imagine I am Strydom and you are the students. What do you want to say to me?' Initially, participants had to be reminded to speak in role and the researcher replied in role. Soon, however, participants' involvement in the scene revealed firm historical knowledge and strong emotions of anger, pain and frustration. The extreme connection to the roles finally led to a participant, a relatively passive one, shouting out in a loud voice, 'Strydom, just fuck off!' This was an opportune time to step out of the role and lead a full debriefing session, unpacking all the aspects that emerged and considering the consequences if such questions and comments were made in the past.

At each stage, the group considered role-play interpretations, and understood the interpretations against the history involved in the play. Throughout the three weeks of lectures and tutorials, the group also considered how to use the strategies to make the text come alive in their own classrooms, related issues to their own lives, discussed how they would relate the issues to learners' lives, considered issues within the play as catalysts to implement academic and social change, and engaged with the issues in the text as opportunities for participants to serve as agents of change. Issues focussed on in this cycle were race, identity, gender and patriarchy (both individually and by the state), culture and class.

#### **5.4.2. Data collection, findings and interpretations**

In cycle three, the following themes emerged from individual interviews (See Appendix J), written work, and student evaluations (See Appendix O): The power of effective, engaging teaching strategies; Using the text to effect academic and social change; and Teachers as agents of change.

##### **5.4.2.1. Theme 1: The power of effective, engaging teaching strategies**

The interviews revealed that, in the main, participants thoroughly enjoyed the use of role-plays and teacher-in-role, and found reading the play aloud and using the DVD very effective. This finding reinforced those of the student evaluations where all participants strongly agreed that they 'enjoyed the lectures' (Question 15) and that the teaching strategies used helped them to understand the play (Question 5).

Nine of the ten interview participants indicated that they would use the strategies in their own classrooms and indicated a preference for the use of teacher-in-role. Teacher-in-role required greater input from the teacher than from the learners and could indicate a need for control on the part of the participants or could reflect participants' uncertainty of who their learners would be and, thus, uncertainty about how learners would react to such strategies. The student evaluations, too, reflected that all participants knew how to implement the teaching strategies in their classrooms (Question 6). However, the degree of agreement varied with over half the participants indicating an 'agree' response and the others indicating a 'strongly agree' response. The varying responses to Question 6 were important because the majority of participants answered 'strongly agree' to the other questions in this section of the student evaluation form. The responses to Question 6 indicated that although participants did not disagree with the statement, they were not as confident of their responses as they were with the other answers. This was an understandable reaction, as most participants had not experienced the teaching strategies before.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree
1. The lecturer was well prepared.	45	
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	45	
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	45	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	45	
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	45	
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	20	25
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	45	
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	43	2
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	45	
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	45	

**Theme 1: The power of effective, engaging teaching strategies: Table R**

Other responses in the student evaluation indicated that participants believed that the lecturer was well-prepared (Question 1), used language that participants understood (Question 3),

presented lectures in an interesting way and stimulated participants' enthusiasm (Question 4), asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7), and had a good relationship with the class (Question 9). An interviewee noted, 'You're a good role model', and another confessed, 'I usually hate lectures. I find them boring. Your lectures have variety. I never know what's going to come next'. It was important that participants identified the researcher as a positive role model and recognised the importance of variety in teaching and learning situations.

Interesting comments emerged from an interview participant who performed in a band, singing and playing the guitar. He indicated that he 'really liked the play', had researched the music of the time and he found the music 'really cool'. He even believed the clothes they wore at the time were 'so cool'. He noted that it would have been a good idea for the class to stage the play, and stated, 'This is a relevant play, not the usual AIDS stuff we get to read'. The comments were important because the participant had revealed that he had been inspired by the play to research aspects beyond the play. His suggestions for wanting to stage the play also indicated his confidence in the validity and significance of the messages in the play.

The student evaluations also revealed that participants believed the lectures were clear and well-delivered (Question 2) and participants, generally, felt comfortable to participate in class (Question 8). The results of Question 8 were different to the results in the previous two cycles. In cycle one, participants were uncertain how they felt about participating in class; by cycle two, they indicated a measure of comfort in class participation. In cycle three, the majority of participants indicated that they felt very comfortable to participate in class. The results of Question 8 were also evident in the candour and honesty of the stories of participants' pasts and of their parents' pasts, and participants listened intently and responded empathetically.

While at the initial lecture of cycle three participants appeared concerned about the methodology, subsequent lectures proved completely different. Each of the concerns participants raised was addressed – 'Will we need to act?'; 'I'm not coming to the front'; 'I'm very self-conscious'. Participants were assured that there was no performance involved and sharing was optional; they were told that no one was to come to the front of the class as all strategies were designed to take place at desks; they were reminded that the strategies were ways to bring texts alive in their own classrooms. Most importantly, they were assured of confidentiality and respect. The concerns of the participants reflected some of the concerns of teachers in Royka's (2002) study when teachers were asked to use interactive, co-operative

learning methods. Teachers in Royka’s study feared losing control in their classrooms, were anxious about the scepticism of their colleagues, and believed that using interactive, co-operative learning methods would break the traditions of the school, among other fears. However, in this cycle, the strategies were engaged with very enthusiastically and participants indicated that the co-operative, interactive strategies could prove very powerful in their own classrooms.

**5.4.2.2. Theme 2: Using the text to effect academic and social change**

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don’t know
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	23	22	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.		6	39
12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	8	37	

**Theme 2: Using the text to effect academic and social change: Table S**

The interviews revealed that participants believed that, despite this being a play of the 1980s, set in the 1950s, important issues emerged from the play such as the ‘force of power structures’; the State’s ability ‘to strip whole generations of their dignity’; ‘the absurdity of classifying people in racial terms’; and ‘forcing an identity onto you’. A participant noted, ‘It was like the government decided to rape and went in. It didn’t matter that the people said “No”’. The student evaluations (depicted in the table above) largely confirmed the interview findings with participants confirming, by either agreeing or strongly agreeing, that important issues were raised through the study of the play (Question 10).

The results of Question 12 were important. In cycles one and two, participants indicated that they were uncertain whether lectures showed them how they could make their learners grow. In cycle three, all participants found out, through the lectures, how they could help their learners grow and develop academically and socially. Thus the use of explicit teaching proved successful for participants, along with clear pointers about how the issues and events in the play could help to effect academic and social change. The ten interviews conducted also indicated that participants felt ‘very confident to deal with issues’; ‘quite clear about how to

use the play or novel or whatever to engage with important issues'; and 'more on top of things in teaching and helping to make a change to learners' lives'.

The results of Question 11 revealed that participants were uncertain of the usefulness of the writing tasks to their thinking. Whereas the previous cycles used extensive writing pieces, this cycle used multiple-choice questions, quick quizzes, one-word answers, and just one piece of extended writing. It was thus possible that the short writing tasks were not useful to participants' thinking. Interview participants found the short writing tasks 'fun'; 'good quick ways to test our understanding'; and 'lovely. I thought it was a good way to break up the lecture'. However, no interview participant indicated that the writing tasks were, in any way, useful to their thinking. Thus, the researcher realised that writing tasks had to be improved if used in future lectures and had to be designed to improve or extend participants' thinking.

During the interviews, the researcher found the participants very candid and comfortable. While the researcher worked from a semi-structured interview schedule, participants often spoke about other issues that emanated from the questions. For example, an interview participant revealed a very different view to the other interviewees regarding the importance of the text to effect academic and social change. She noted that she understood the importance of using a text to effect academic and social changes in learners. However, she asked, 'Why aren't we studying the classics? Can't we study beautiful stories about ... falling in love ... and ... and ... sitting down to tea? You know, lovely things where people are happy and dignified and free from constant challenges. I want to smile when I read a book. Don't think I'm a bimbo but sometimes it's nice to just escape. Can't we show learners how the other half lives?' Later in the interview, she added, 'I am committed to making a change, and I can do it with the good books, the ones that are uplifting ... motivating... and ...clean'. On being asked what made the books 'clean', she noted that 'there's a clean purpose to the stories' and, she added with a laugh, 'the settings ... they are usually clean too' (more laughter). On being asked if she preferred the study of the so-called canon of English literature, she replied immediately, 'Absolutely, I love those books'.

The interview with this participant took much longer than anticipated and she revealed much of her life including her background, parents and schooling. Her story was one of hardship and sacrifice, and she revealed that she was a child of a Black mother and White father. While she spoke both English and Zulu at home, and both parents could speak both languages, she did not read Zulu books, exclaiming, 'Oh no, I can't. That's not literature'. And yet she would

not look the researcher in the eyes when talking, a sign of respect in Zulu culture. On being asked why she would not look at the researcher when in conversation, her reply was, 'It's a sign of respect. I don't look at an elder in the face. I know it's crazy but I can't do it. I can't even stand, you know, if you are sitting. My mother was ... is very strict about ... proper behaviour ... and respecting others, you know, elders'. The participant also revealed that she went to a 'multi-racial high school' where most of her peers and all of her teachers were White and 'we studied only the classics in English. I can't remember doing anything very modern, except one text in grade twelve'. When asked if her teachers thought it odd that she failed to look at them when she spoke to them, the participant answered, 'It never came up. I was under the radar. Nobody noticed me, I think'. It appeared that the participant was provided with no space for her voice and experiences, and was thus denied agency (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). She understood that her language and culture should not be dignified. It thus became clear that the participant constructed her identity by the practices and relations dominating the school (Giroux 2009). In many ways, the school and teachers were using a process of hegemony to enable the dominant culture of the school to dominate subordinate groups through the use of consensual social practices (McLaren 2009). It also appeared as if learners were rewarded for supporting the values espoused by their teachers (Bourdieu and Passeron 1997).

The participant was an enigma to the researcher. She had a very clear idea who she was and what she wanted to achieve in her classes. While she respected her mother's views on manners and courtesy, she did not believe that the literature written in her mother's home language was worthy of being called literature. While she said, more than once, that she was committed to making a difference to her learners, she wanted to expose them to books that were possibly unlike their own realities. While her views complement Savvidou's (2004) finding that texts have the power to allow learners to understand contexts not their own, she was not prepared to consider reading books written in Zulu, which could also include contexts that were not her own. She also wanted literature to help her escape to people who were 'happy, dignified and free from challenges'. The participant was possibly revealing a need to escape her own reality and enjoy living, for a while, 'how the other half lives'. Her high school experiences, which were academically successful, possibly developed and reinforced these views but, three years after leaving school, she still maintained the values and dominant culture of her teachers. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) note, learners are rewarded if they support the values espoused by their teachers even if such values contradict their interests.

After this participant read through the analysis of the interview, she verified it and agreed to have it read out to the other participants. The researcher had to consider that the participant might be representative of other participants. Thus, the researcher realised that participants had to learn how to critique structures, values and institutions that reproduced a type of social order, promoted particular values and negated others (Ladson-Billing 2009). They also needed to interrogate their own choices and how those choices were determined.

**5.4.2.3. Theme 3: Teachers as agents of change**

In their interviews, participants appeared to feel much more confident in their abilities to serve as agents of change in their classrooms than in their previous participatory action research cycles. Nine of the ten participants interviewed noted that they would try to make a difference to their learners’ lives and help them grow and develop. Comments like ‘of course I will’; ‘I strongly believe I can do it’; ‘I know I can do it in time’; ‘it’s a big step and even responsibility, but I think I will do it’; and ‘it won’t happen just, boom, but, you know, it’s a process and I will get there. I want to’ indicated a sense of determination with the realisation of the extent of the responsibility. They were also indicating that they believed that they had the capability to facilitate the change effort (Lunenburg 2010).

The student evaluations revealed a slightly less enthusiastic response than the interview responses. While all participants noted that the lectures made them think about themselves as teachers (Question 13) and as potential change agents in the classroom (Question 14), there were still some participants who agreed, rather than strongly agreed, with the statements. It must be remembered that the student evaluations were anonymous and thus safe, while the interviews were conducted face-to-face with the researcher and thus it was possible that participants indicated what they believed the researcher wanted to hear, what Stober (2001) called the social desirability effect. However, a good sign was that no participant provided a ‘disagree’ or ‘neutral’ answer to the question, indicating a level of belief in becoming an agent of change.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	35	10
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	30	15

**Theme 3: Teachers as agents of change: Table T**

The written task focussed on an issue that differed slightly from the student evaluations and the interviews. Participants were provided with the following question:

*In Act 1, Scene 4, both Ruth and Jakes refuse to be defined within the narrow confines of a fixed identity. In Act 1, Scene 7, the theme of identity emerges for a second time when Lulu asks, ‘So what is a Jewish?’ What important ideas about identity emerge in this discussion? In the light of their words, how would you define your identity? Has your definition of your own identity changed in any way? What is your understanding of a teacher’s identity? Write out your answer on your own. Your work will be collected.*

As the study focussed on student teachers of literature becoming agents of change, the aspect of ‘becoming’ implied that their identities as teachers, and otherwise, were being highlighted. The study aimed to shift participants from the potential to the actuality of becoming agents of change. Thus, issues of identity needed to be considered.

In their written responses, participants pointed to the fact that many important ideas about identity emerged in the play. Participants noted that identity was ‘multifaceted’; ‘unique and individual’; ‘related to your personality and character’; ‘more than just physical attributes’; and ‘changed all the time’. Participants also noted that ‘we present different identities to different people’; ‘people change your identity’; and ‘we can’t put people into boxes’. In contrast to or in addition to the participant who noted that identity ‘changed all the time’, another pointed out that ‘some things stay constant’. A participant noted that identity is ‘your true essence. It’s not how someone defines you. Race, religion, gender are all just tiny parts of who we are’. Finally, participants focussed on the play by noting, ‘You can’t give glib definitions of characters. Is Mingus just a gangster? He is a good son and more – good and bad’; ‘Charlie is the character we know least about. What is his identity? Why is his identity not important’; ‘Ruth and Jakes talk about their identities but the play actually reveals very little about all the characters’ identities’; and ‘while characters say they don’t want to be defined within narrow confines of a fixed identity, we aren’t really sure what aspects could make up their identities. We just surmise. We realise they are not revealing too much. Maybe that’s the point’. Responses revealed that participants were responding to important ideas about identity and recognised that identity is complex, changing and difficult to define. They also understood that myriad factors determined one’s identity and that it was very difficult to define a person’s identity because so much was unknown. In addition, they also pointed out that the identities of characters in the play were not fully explored.

Many comments emerged in response to the question: How would you define your identity? Participants identified their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language and age as factors that comprised their identities. Others mentioned roles that they played in their lives such as daughter, sister, mother, son, brother, girlfriend, aunt, grandchild, wife, student and congregant. A participant noted that s/he was identified, by his/-her 'relationships – family, church, university. They all make me who I am'. A participant pointed to his/-her 'history' as being important, and another believed his/-her 'social life (my dealings with society) defines who I am'. One participant noted that s/he was also 'a future teacher'. Like in the previous question, participants understood the complexity of the concept 'identity', and believed that demographic factors, social and institutional roles, relationships and histories made them who they were.

Of importance was that, except for one participant, all others did not believe that their identities included their being teachers in the making. While many saw themselves as students, the role did not extend beyond the student role to the role for which they were studying. However, it must be borne in mind that the participants were not in their final year and thus the role of teacher did not need to be considered or embraced at this point. The study thus served as a developmental process which needed to be worked through over time to enable the shift from student teacher to teacher to teacher as agent of change.

The third question participants were asked was: Has your definition of your own identity changed in any way? All participants answered in the affirmative and many explained how people or events in their lives helped to shape their identities. Some participants noted that they presented 'new faces when faced with new people and situations'. Significantly, two participants noted 'This study has made me think about myself as a teacher and whether I can make a difference to the kids at school. Very scary. That is changing my identity' and 'How do I become a change agent? You ask us that and I have to think about it. I have to think about becoming something. And if I don't, do I fail? They are important questions and I know we will get there someday'. The two participants identified important issues: they thought about becoming teachers and becoming change agents; they recognised the enormity of the task; they realised that their identities were changing; and while revealing their insecurities, they believed that they would attain their goals. Thus, the possibility for change was highlighted.

The written task also asked the following question: What is your understanding of a teacher's identity? In response to the question, a participant asked 'How does a teacher act? There should be a manual outlining what we should do' and another asked, 'Will I be recognised as a teacher? Will I fit in?' Both responses identified participants' confusion and uncertainty about the roles they needed to play in their professional lives as teachers. While a participant asked for 'a manual outlining what we should do', s/he failed to recognise that the four years of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree was designed to do just that. Additionally, the participant was possibly reflecting the inadequacies of the degree to provide the answers sought. Some participants outlined the qualities that a teacher should demonstrate such as being 'professional'; 'prepared'; 'creative'; 'caring'; 'respectful to learners'; and 'dedicated'; and that 'a teacher's identity is determined by her personality', reflecting Meister's (2010) findings that a teacher's disposition determined his/-her effectiveness as a teacher. In many ways, the qualities identified by participants were similar to participants' ideas of the teacher they would most like to become (cycle one) and thus indicated that their ideals had not changed significantly. A participant pointed out, 'I have a very clear idea about a teacher's identity. It includes how she acts, talks and behaves. As a teacher she has to know the rules of the school, curriculum, etc. And she has to know what language to use in her classrooms', and another noted that 'a teacher's identity is shaped by the school and its culture, learners, staff', emphasising Giroux's (2009) contention that individuals construct and are constructed by the social environment. While both participants were reflecting the need for knowledge about their schools and the acknowledgement that the schools influenced who they became as teachers, they did not reveal how they would work within the rules and culture of the schools. They were revealing that, at this point, they felt that they would allow the schools to shape their identities and failed to acknowledge their ownership and agency in the process. Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) note that change occurs most successfully when all players demonstrate agency and voice and when they participate democratically in the process, and it was not clear if the participants grasped the notion that they could have agency and voice in becoming the teachers they wanted to be. However, there was the very real possibility that all participants, with time and experience, could still grow and learn, and could change how they recognised a teacher's identity.

### **5.4.3. Reflections and decisions made**

During the interviews, the researcher made note of two important findings which she did not share with the group. The first finding revolved around a participant who was interviewed.

The participant had joined the group in cycle three (he was a returning student who needed to complete this one outstanding module to complete his degree. He had been working in a bar prior to returning to university). Therefore, he had not been part of the introduction to the participatory action research study and no baseline information was collected from him. He did not participate in cycles one and two, and he did not engage in any reflections from cycles one and two and the decisions that emerged from those discussions. He was informed about the study, asked to choose whether he wanted to participate and consented to being part of the study, albeit for one cycle. He was much older than most of the other participants and appeared not to know them well. However, he made his presence felt by answering all questions, challenging opinions, typing on his cellphone, and passing snide comments. The group, who had gelled over the past two cycles, appeared annoyed by his behaviour, and at one lecture, a participant had to be stopped from threatening him. In many ways, the researcher found him destructive and yet, he had to be seen as a challenge, typical of the many challenges that participants would face in their own classrooms. The new participant agreed to being interviewed, and while all other interviews occurred at the end of the cycle, he was called in at the end of the first week of the three-week cycle.

The new participant indicated, during his interviews, that he ‘hated the play’ but could give not give reasons for it except, ‘I don’t know. I have a right to my beliefs’. He could not understand why we had to do a play ‘about this whole apartheid thing’. He asked ‘why do you people have to go on about the past? Okay, so my ancestors messed up big time. So do I have to take the flak?’ On being asked who he was referring to as ‘you people’, he answered, ‘Everyone ... lecturers’. He pointed out that he ‘hated the music’ that was played from the era and indicated that the DVD ‘was stuff I had seen before, so nothing new’. He thought the use of interactive, co-operative learning strategies was ‘utterly useless’ and a ‘waste of time’, and again, he had no reasons for his views except that ‘it wouldn’t work’. On being asked if he believed he would be an agent of change in his classroom, his response was ‘I don’t even know what’s going on tomorrow. So, how can I even think about being an agent of change?’ The participant was revealing his many challenges including that of alienation from the group. He was, also, perhaps, revealing his experiences of how the world worked.

Thus, the major part of the interview was characterised by the participant’s hostility and reluctance to talk, and yet he agreed to being interviewed. After the questions from the interview schedule were complete, the researcher said, ‘Okay, now tell me what is really going on. You are bright and astute and have some insightful comments. What’s the story?’

While the participant answered that there was ‘no story’, he soon revealed his financial frustrations, his annoyance at needing to return to university, and his perceptions that the other students were talking about him. He was assured that he and his views were valued and that he needed to be aware that he was being disrespectful to other participants.

In the second week of the cycle, the participant returned to class. As he spent his time in lectures openly working on his cellphone, the researcher decided to engage him and asked him to research information on the internet, using his phone. He was asked to access information on the Sophiatown era, the laws of the time, the dates and times of the forced removals, and on the teaching strategies being used to study the play. Throughout the lecture, and in the third and final lecture of the cycle, he provided information as he accessed it and shared it with the class. He appeared happier and seemed to be more comfortable, and the other participants affirmed his contributions.

The involvement with the participant revealed many important facts. Dormant (1997) notes that participants will embrace change if they are involved in the decision-making process, and this participant had no part in the process. This participant experienced at least two of Lewin’s (1951) three stages of change in that he did experience an intervention (serving as researcher for the group) which did change his existing behaviour (Lewin’s concept of unfreezing or moving the established behaviour) and he did demonstrate behaviour that was beneficial to the group. Whether his new behaviour would continue, stabilise and be reinforced was unknown. The researcher also realised that participants’ histories and the impact of their social contexts had to be engaged with in order to take the teaching and learning process forward (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009).

While many questions were not asked of the participant and thus many answers were missing, the participant made the researcher reflect differently from what she was currently doing. While previous reflections focussed on participants and their opinions as well as introspection on the part of the researcher, the participant and his behaviour forced the researcher to step back from the research, resist becoming emotionally affronted by his actions, and work through options from the participant’s perspective. It also forced the researcher to consider whether it was important to stop the disrespectful behaviour of the participant first or work through his concerns first. It was a fine line of options that was never truly resolved. However, the researcher believed that the participant had changed his behaviour, and the other participants recognised the strategy to involve the particular participant. The researcher

realised the need for flexibility in engaging with people, the need to centre attention on the needs of all participants, and the need to acknowledge that participants enter lecture-rooms with histories that are vast and sometimes difficult.

The second finding that the researcher did not share with the group involved the interview participants. While nine of the ten interview participants appeared very comfortable during the interviews, they also felt secure enough to open up about issues that were not part of the interview questions nor were they related to the study. Personal issues relating to participants' health, finances and families emerged and participants appeared to need an outlet for their problems. In their one-to-one interviews, participants shared their struggles and the researcher recognised their pleas for help. The researcher realised that participants needed an avenue to talk, and despite the researcher having no formal training in dealing with many of the issues, she felt an obligation to check on them and to let them know that she was available should they need to talk. She also referred them to the relevant professionals who could assist them.

The researcher realised that the participatory action research study had brought all participants and the researcher closer together, that issues of trust and respect were evident, and that participants appeared to feel comfortable being honest with the researcher. It was also possible that the sharing of stories by the participants and researcher during cycle three had created a bond between them. However, the researcher had to reflect very carefully and had to critically evaluate the role she was playing. The researcher recognised that the study had spawned results that were unanticipated, and it was very important that she knew who participants were and understood their contexts, including some high-risk conflict contexts. The researcher was being called upon to demonstrate societal agency which involved understanding participants' backgrounds and participants themselves, who might be high risk, lack basic needs or live in environments characterised by struggle (Campbell 2009). Societal agency is an aspect of change agency, a goal of the research study. In this instance, however, it was the researcher who was being asked to enact it, but the enactment could have served as an example for participants as well.

The researcher did not share the two examples above with participants in the study. However, the group reflected on the cycle and indicated that, of the three cycles, cycle three was the most useful one for them. They believed that they learnt effective, engaging teaching strategies, with a participant noting that reading the text aloud was more successful than he anticipated and suggested using the strategy again. Some participants confessed that, while

they were able to access information from the internet, they were not very confident about accessing journal articles and suggested engaging with the process. Many participants noted that being taught how to make simple DVDs for their own classrooms was very useful, and a participant asked for greater exposure to the resource. However, many participants had experimented with the techniques and appeared to be highly skilled at the process of making a film. It was decided that participants would assist to extend the teaching and learning of making more complex DVDs. The researcher reflected that while participants needed varied writing tasks, the tasks needed to be more focussed and designed for a specific purpose.

Participants also indicated that they had a clearer understanding of how to use the text to address issues of importance in their classrooms. They noted that they had an increased confidence to engage with issues. In terms of the issues that emerged from the text, participants indicated that issues of identity still needed unpacking. Participants also noted that issues of age, race, gender, and tolerance needed to be addressed, especially in light of participants' frustrations when dealing with the new participant (who was absent on the day on which the reflections occurred). Finally, participants noted that, through the interactive co-operative learning strategies, what Caldwell (2005) called a participatory model of learning and change, they had built relationships, had to learn to respect each other's views, enjoyed working in groups, and perceived a sense of trust in the lecture-room. They thus experienced what Campbell et al. (2009) identify as interpersonal agency, which is characterised by trust, building relationships, working in teams and respecting each other's views, and which calls attention to collegial engagement, advocacy, moral responsibility and commitment. What the researcher realised, however, was that it was imperative to explicitly assure participants of confidentiality, trust and respect to ensure comfortable participation in lectures.

Finally, participants claimed that they were clearer in their understandings of what made a teacher an agent of change. Yet, they did indicate confusion and uncertainty about their roles and functions as teachers and as agents of change. In addition, they could not comprehend that part of their identities comprised being teachers-in-the-making.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

For many participants, cycle three signalled the end of their engagement with English Education. The three cycles therefore had to equip participants to become effective, engaged teachers of literature, they had to understand how to use literature to help their learners develop academically and socially, and they had to recognise how to become agents of

academic and social change. While participants' identities as teachers were in the process of developing and they were moving towards becoming agents of change, the researcher hoped that the three cycles equipped participants, especially those leaving the study, with the ideas, tools and motivation to grow and develop as teachers who sought to make a difference to their learners' lives through their engagement with literary texts.

Overall, participants made decisions whether to use education to create passive, risk-free citizens or to use education to create citizens informed by justice, happiness and equality (Dewey 1929). Those decisions, while complex and shaped by many factors, were considered by participants as they continually re-defined and re-delineated their identities.

## CHAPTER 6: SECOND YEAR OF STUDY

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### 6.1. Introduction

Chapter six considers how cycles four, five and six in the second year of the study were accomplished. These cycles continue from the first three cycles of the participatory action research, discussed in chapter five. Each cycle is discussed by introducing the three texts, namely the novel, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, the film, *Much Ado about Nothing* by Kenneth Branagh and the play, *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, and considering how each text was studied. The chapter explains how the data was collected and analysed, and how the reflections by participants informed the following cycle. At the end of cycle six, the findings from interviews with four novice teachers who had completed the six cycles of the participatory action research study are presented. The interviews were conducted to ascertain the impact of the study, if any.

### 6.2. Cycle four

#### 6.2.1. Participants' profiles

The tables that follow indicate the characteristics of participants in terms of race, gender, home language and age. Cycle four involved forty-one participants who had registered for the English Education Major 410 module. All participants were preparing to teach in the Senior

and/-or Further Education and Training phases of high school, and the majority of participants were aged between twenty one and twenty four years old. There were eighteen Indian and eighteen African participants (44% each), three White participants (7%) and two Coloured participants (5%). The group was still predominantly female, like in previous cycles, and while 59% of participants considered English as their home language, 41% spoke an African language at home.

English Education Major 410: Semester 1: 41 students

Race

Indian	African	White	Coloured	Other
18	18	3	2	NIL
44%	44%	7%	5%	0%

Gender

Female	Male
29	12
71%	29%

Home Language

English	IsiZulu	South Sotho	Xhosa	North Sotho
24	14	2	0	1
59%	34%	5%	0%	2%

Age

Age	Number of students
21 - 28	36
31 - 38	5

**Race, gender, home language, age: Table U**

### **6.2.2. Engagement with *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997)**

In cycle four, Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* was studied using critical literacy, and marxist and feminist literary theories (discussed in chapter five). The novel was also examined using a postcolonial literary theory (focussing on the legacy of colonial rule). Over three weeks the lectures highlighted the author's biography, the setting in the novel, and the social structure of the society presented in the novel in terms of caste, religion, politics, race, culture and class. The language used in the novel, the characters and relationships encountered, and the narrative structure were also unpacked. The importance of memories and how they were selected and remembered, as well as the value of history were considered. In class discussions, participants focussed on many issues including power, norms governing relationships, forms of abuse, cultural and other loyalties, Anglophile consciousness, prejudices and beliefs, and customs, rituals and traditions.

The novel was used to facilitate various pedagogical strategies that participants could employ in their classrooms. Through individual, pair and group-work, participants considered academic articles provided by the researcher and those located by participants. They read interviews with the author and were directed to an internet site carrying an audio interview with the author (<http://www.salon.com/sept97/ooroy.html>). The researcher played a DVD, using moving images and music of Kerala, which forms the setting of the novel. As in cycle three, participants were shown how to make their own DVDs using moving images and music. This would enable them to produce their own resources for their classrooms. Several extracts from the text were also read aloud by the researcher and the participants.

The concept 'agent of change' was explored at every lecture. Participants considered how to use issues of class, race, culture, gender and patriarchy, tolerance and resilience, and identity in the novel as catalysts for discussion in relation to change agency. They also discussed how they could use the issues to create awareness in their classrooms and effect change among learners. In addition, participants were asked to write responses to a question. At the end of cycle four, seven participants were observed twice in their classrooms during their four weeks of Teaching Practice to determine the impact of the interventions used in the participatory action research cycles completed thus far.

### **6.2.3. Data collection, findings and interpretations**

Cycle four used lecture-room observations (See Appendix G), written work, student evaluations (See Appendix O), and Teaching Practice observations (See Appendix H) to ascertain the extent to which the research questions were being answered. The following

themes emerged from the analysis of the various data collection methods: Active engagement with strategies; Using issues to challenge and critique; and Confronting change agency.

### 6.2.3.1. Theme 1: Active engagement with strategies

Findings related to participants' perceptions and experiences of using interactive, co-operative learning strategies were elicited from observations in the lecture-room and school classrooms, and from student evaluations.

The results of the student evaluations, related to theme 1, indicated that all participants strongly believed that the researcher was well prepared (Question 1), asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7) and had a good relationship with the class (Question 9). All participants also strongly believed that the lectures, which they enjoyed (Question 15), were clear and well-delivered (Question 2). The majority of participants understood the language of the lecturer (Question 3), believed that the lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated enthusiasm for the subject (Question 4), and felt comfortable to participate in class (Question 8). Thus, the decision by all research participants to use modelling, experiential learning and explicit teaching to explore effective, engaging teaching strategies proved successful.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
1. The lecturer was well prepared.	40		
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	40		
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	37	3	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	39	1	
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	18	22	
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	16	22	2
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	40		
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	38	2	
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	40		
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	40		

**Theme 1: Active engagement with strategies: Table V**

The lecture-room observations emphasised the findings in the student evaluations where most participants were seen to actively engage in class discussions, and in group and pair-work. Active engagement and dialogue are essential components of a critical pedagogy approach (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). The group and pair-work, whether oral or written, effectively engaged participants in co-operative learning activities. Bartolome (2009) points out that co-operative learning is part of a humanising pedagogy and thus should be encouraged. In the lecture-room, participants were observed to be comfortable reading aloud in front of their peers. This was very different to the observations in cycle one where participants were very reluctant to read aloud for fear of making mistakes. Thus, participants were observed to have learned, through practice, to be more confident in their abilities, less afraid of making mistakes, and more prepared to take risks. The researcher believes that participants understood, through the three previous cycles, that the lecture-room can be a place of trust where participation is respected. Thus, a nurturing, supportive environment may serve to enable participants' voice, agency and democratic participation.

More than half the participants (55%) indicated in the student evaluations that they agreed (though not strongly) with the statement that the teaching strategies used in the lecture helped them to understand the novel, while 45% indicated that they strongly agreed (Question 5). Similarly, more than half the participants (55%) noted that they knew chose an 'agree' response to the statement relating to knowing how to implement teaching strategies in the classroom, 40% of participants chose a 'strongly agree' response and two participants (5%) chose a 'neutral' response, indicating that they did not know or were unsure (Question 6). The findings indicated that the majority of participants were convinced, but not greatly convinced, that the strategies used in the lecture-room helped them to understand the novel, and were similarly convinced, but not greatly convinced, on how to implement the teaching strategies in their classrooms.

The strategies used in the lecture-room involved, among other activities, participants reading academic articles provided either by the researcher or accessed on their own, and working on tasks designed around the articles. Participants agreed that they needed to be able to independently research, access and engage with information. The lecture-room observations noted that five participants did not access articles, some (at least four) appeared to have copied other participants' articles (they cited time constraints as their excuse), and three participants stated that they found the articles very difficult to read. It was possible that others felt the same way too. However, the majority successfully accessed, read and engaged with

the articles both in and out of the lecture-room. While participants were provided with print interviews with the author, they were asked to access an online interview. Again, at least twelve participants (29%) indicated that they did not access the interview and thus could not fully engage in discussions about the interview. The researcher had to question whether she ought to have supplied material to participants or insist that they endeavour to empower themselves, should they wish to succeed. Overall, the majority of participants were able to actively engage with the strategies in the lecture-room, on condition that they came prepared to do so. They agreed that they needed to become independent as they were to go into schools the following year and needed to rely on themselves.

The participants were also shown a DVD of moving images and music of Kerala, the setting of the novel, *The God of Small Things* and were shown how to create their own DVDs using moving images and music. In cycle three, participants were shown a DVD of still images (of photographs) and music and were shown how to produce a DVD to use in their own classrooms. The change from cycle three to four was vast with most participants, having experimented with the computer software, being very familiar with the technology and who then taught the researcher many important techniques. They had assumed agency and, in many respects, served as experts who shared their knowledge with the researcher and their peers.

The classroom observations during Teaching Practice were also considered to determine the extent to which participants actively engaged with and used interactive, co-operative learning strategies. Seven participants who had been through cycle four were observed in their classrooms on two occasions (See Appendix H). A description of the participants and the types of schools they taught in is outlined in the table that follows. Pseudonyms are used for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, in accordance with the university's ethics policy.

	Name	Race	Gender	Co-educational/ Single sex school	Resources in school	Grade taught	Aspects taught
1	Lwazi	African	Male	Co-educational	Poorly resourced - previously an Africans-only high school	10 (15-16 yrs old)	Short Stories
2	Beena	Indian	Female	Co-educational	Moderately resourced - previously an Indians-only high	11 (16-17 yrs old)	Novel

					school		
3	Liz	White	Female	Boys only	Well resourced - previously a Whites-only high school	9 (14-15 yrs old)	Drama
4	Cherise	Coloured	Female	Co-educational	Poorly resourced - previously an Indians-only high school	9 (14-15 yrs old)	Poetry; Short Stories
5	Antjie	White	Female	Boys only	Well resourced - previously a Whites-only high school	8 (13-14 yrs old)	Poetry
6	Rukaya	Indian	Female	Co-educational	Poorly resourced - previously an Indians-only high school	9 (14-15 yrs old)	Novel
7	Nandi	African	Female	Co-educational	Poorly resourced - previously an Africans-only high school	10 (15-16 yrs old)	Short Stories

#### Teaching Practice observations: Table W

Participants were informed when the researcher would arrive for the Teaching Practice observations, they were invited to discuss their ideas with the researcher prior to the lesson should they need to, and four participants did take up the invitation, and they were asked to teach an aspect of literature for the purposes of the study. After the first lesson, the researcher provided feedback on the lessons and suggested ideas that could be used to improve lessons. Participants were allowed to work with their learners for a period of time before the first and second classroom observations to allow participants to acclimatise to the school environments.

To answer the first research question (What strategies does the student teacher of literature employ to serve as an effective, engaged teacher of literature?), the researcher focussed on the strategies used by the participants to effectively engage learners in their classrooms, and has presented the data in the form of vignettes. The research question echoes Theme 1 (Active engagement with strategies) of cycle four.

##### 6.2.3.1.1. Lwazi

Lwazi's school, accessed through dirt roads, serviced an indigent rural community, and the journey to the school had to be negotiated by avoiding cows and other livestock. At the school, too, on the first visit, a cow blocked the entrance and had to be persuaded to move,

and chickens and ducks ran freely in and out of classrooms. The school was clean and neat, and the learners were well-mannered at all times.

Learners were Zulu-speaking and were being taught English as a first additional language. However, the medium of instruction at the school was English. Of interest was the fact that the principal had decided that every learner and teacher in the school was to speak English at all times. The principal described the resistance that teachers had to the idea of using English only as they had insisted that code-switching between Zulu and English was the only way learners could access information. They also believed that using English only would diminish the importance of the home language in learners' eyes. The principal also noted that, despite the medium of instruction being English, most lessons were taught solely in Zulu, that code-switching was rare, and that teachers themselves struggled with using English in the classroom. However, being an English-medium school, all learners wrote tests and examinations in English. After a parents' meeting where parents unanimously voted in favour of using English only, the principal asked teachers to try the 'only English' policy as a 'test run'. He noted that after many 'false starts', all teachers and learners now used English only in all lessons and in the school grounds.

The principal also explained that the school and the community had no electricity until 2010. Electricity was provided to the school only, not to the community. The principal was instrumental in raising funds from businesses and from a past learner for a television, DVD player, computers, a science laboratory and security measures for the school. Learners were allowed to stay at school at the end of the day to do homework and they could stay to watch television or films on certain days. The principal noted that teachers who lived on the premises assisted learners with homework and monitored the use of the television and DVD player. He did note that the school was very concerned about the security of the equipment because there had already been two attempted burglaries.

Lwazi's first lesson to a grade ten co-educational class in a rural school focussed on a short story. In the lesson, he used charts that he had made to enhance learners' understanding of the story, and he referred to the charts throughout the reading and discussion of the story. After the short story was read by him and was discussed through questions and discussion, he placed learners in groups and gave each group magazines, scissors, chart paper and glue sticks to make a collage that depicted the main ideas in the story. They were to present their charts to the class in the following lesson. He also brought in a compact disk (CD) of music based

on the music referred to in the story and a CD player, and he played the music for the learners while they worked on their collages. Lwazi walked round to each group and ascertained their progress and assisted, when necessary. Lwazi's lesson utilised visual, oral and aural aspects and learners were actively involved especially during the creation of the collage. Decisions were debated and reasons for choices were deliberated using English at all times. Even when the researcher walked around to the groups, learners appeared confident and spoke English without hesitation.

At the second lesson dealing with a short story, learners had already read and discussed the story at a previous lesson and each group was given a different set of questions based on different aspects of the story. They were asked to work in groups to either present answers to the class or they could present a talk show between a talk show host and a character from the story. However, their questions had to be answered within the talk show. At the lesson, all groups chose to present a talk show (all learners based their presentations on the 'Oprah Winfrey' show) and after each presentation, Lwazi asked presenters questions on aspects of the short story and how they interpreted their characters, and learners were assessed on their presentations. The learners seemed to enjoy the lessons and were enthusiastic about their tasks. The lesson revealed a sense of confidence in learners who were very eager to perform before the class. Their abilities to make choices and to create their own presentation of answers appeared to motivate them to engage actively and to attempt the task with enthusiasm.

At no stage was any language other than English used even when the learners worked in groups, and the learners appeared to be very comfortable using English both in and out of the classroom. On being asked by the researcher about the use of English and not Zulu at school, a learner noted that she needed English 'for our after-school life' and that she spoke Zulu at home. However, Lwazi noted that some teachers were not pleased with the decision to use English only because 'they can't speak well. Their English is bad and ... I guess, they feel embarrassed to speak to learners'. Thus the imposition of English on the entire school could have negative implications for those classes where the teacher was not comfortable using English since the teacher could have difficulties engaging with learners and the content matter. With teaching and learning occurring in the second language, and some teachers being ill-equipped to teach in that language, it is possible that some learners will not be able to read and engage in English. In addition, with restricted access to their mother tongue, it is possible

that learners, who speak Zulu at home, may not be able to read and write in that language. Such learners will be disadvantaged twice over.

Lwazi's mentor teacher was very pleased with his teaching and noted, 'He's better than me'. Of interest to the researcher was the presence of a cane in the classroom. Lwazi noted that it belonged to the teacher mentor but that he (Lwazi) had not used it. On speaking to the teacher mentor, she stated, 'That's how our schools work. When we come to a school, we get books, stationery and a cane'. She indicated that she left the cane on her table and if learners appeared 'naughty or disrespectful or they don't do what I want, I have the stick'. She indicated that she tried putting the cane away in her cupboard but 'they (learners) went mad. They thought, hey, I can do what I want'. She did indicate that she was aware that corporal punishment was illegal 'but the department knows how our schools work'. The mentor teacher's comments reinforce the findings in the baseline information (Chapter four) where practising teachers and student teachers acknowledged the use of corporal punishment in South African schools. It also supports the findings from 27% of the fifty-eight participants who believed that the teacher who was administering corporal punishment to learners was representative of South African teachers (Chapter five).

#### **6.2.3.1.2. Beena**

Beena taught a novel to a grade eleven co-educational class in a moderately resourced school. Even though the medium of instruction was English and learners were studying English as a home language, at least half the learners in the class were not speakers of English as a home language. In the first lesson observed, Beena brought in pictures that reflected events and scenes in the novel, she initiated a lively class discussion on the pictures and on the issues in the section of the novel they were considering, and she read extracts expressively from the novel to them. She had developed a worksheet of questions on aspects of the novel and on the pictures, and learners worked on the questions in pairs. Answers from learners were shared and discussed. The lesson provided learners with an opportunity to share their opinions, they were provided with pictures which enhanced understanding and discussion, they were allowed to engage with questions in a co-operative setting, and the teacher brought the text alive with her reading.

In Beena's second lesson on the same novel, she had asked four learners, in a previous lesson, to prepare different extracts from the novel, which they read aloud to the class. After each reading, she posed questions to learners in the class and the answers were used to initiate

discussion. She placed learners in groups of four and they were asked to answer a quiz based on the novel. The aim of the quiz was speed and accuracy and learners embarked on the competition with enthusiasm. The group that completed the quiz fastest and correctly was declared the winner. Thereafter, each group was assigned a high order question that required learners to analyse, synthesise and evaluate information from the novel. After engaging with the question, a member of each group shared answers with the class. Learners were urged to take notes as they provided feedback from their groups and were encouraged to challenge the groups' interpretations. Learners seemed to enjoy the lesson and appeared to be actively engaged at all times. Of significance was the level of energy that defined this lesson. The discussion, element of competition, in-depth dialogue during group-work, and opportunity and ability to challenge interpretations enabled the lesson to actively engage and challenge learners. All learners appeared to cope with the demands of the language and Beena indicated that those learners whose home language was Zulu had been at the school from grade eight and most had been at English-medium primary schools as well. Thus, the use of English was not an obstacle to their engagement.

Beena indicated that her mentor teacher was 'very strong', 'totally prepared' and 'demanded that learners aimed high'. The mentor teacher checked Beena's lesson preparation and marking daily, made suggestions for improvements, sat in on most lessons, and provided feedback to Beena. The school was Beena's former school and the teacher was Beena's former teacher. The teacher mentor also met with the researcher at each visit and provided feedback on Beena's progress. She noted, 'Beena's very good and committed. I'm pushing her to be better because I know her potential. I'd love her to come and teach here next year, if she wants to'. The mentor teacher also noted, 'I know you want Beena to teach certain things and in a certain way, but I have to insist on some things as well'. After a discussion with the mentor teacher, the researcher realised that the mentor teacher expected her learners, who she regarded as 'bright', to be challenged and made to go beyond basic requirements. Beena, the researcher and the mentor teacher acknowledged that the mentor teacher's requirements were fair and reasonable, and Beena committed herself to meeting the mentor teacher's requirements.

#### **6.2.3.1.3. Liz**

Liz taught grade eleven boys at a very well-resourced school and they were all speakers of English as a home language. At her first lesson on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, she

brought in large charts featuring Shakespeare, his home, characters in costume, dress of the era, modes of transportation, weapons and utensils of the time, and the Globe theatre, where many of his plays were staged. She used the charts to introduce the era in which Shakespeare worked, and gave them an imagined interview to read between Shakespeare and an interviewer. She read parts of the interview with a learner, and then she divided the interview among learners who worked in pairs. After they had skimmed through the interview, various learners read it out aloud. She stopped at various places to discuss the interview and to ask learners questions. She then asked the learners to work in pairs to answer a worksheet based on Shakespeare and the era in which he lived. Once the learners had completed the worksheet, she collected them for assessment. It was clear that Liz's use of visual stimuli, discussions and pair-work enabled active engagement by the learners.

In the second lesson, Liz had learners prepare extracts from the play to read aloud in the class. After each dramatised reading, the class discussed the scene and Liz asked learners questions on the extract. Learners also worked on role-plays based on issues that emerged from the play and three groups presented their role-plays. Again, issues that emerged from the role-plays were discussed and debated among the learners. Worksheets were handed to learners to complete as homework. Overall, learners appeared to enjoy the lessons and, while very boisterous, engaged with the tasks enthusiastically. Liz informed the researcher that her mentor teacher provided the charts and worksheets that were used in the lessons. The mentor teacher indicated to the researcher that she monitored all lessons and lesson plans, and intended leaving Liz alone in the classroom in the final week of Teaching Practice. While there appeared to be unequal relations of power (Giroux 2009) between the teacher mentor and the student teacher, and the mentor teacher determined the course of action in the classroom, Liz noted that she felt 'empowered' that she was receiving 'excellent resources from a highly competent teacher'.

#### **6.2.3.1.4. Cherise**

Cherise worked in a poorly resourced co-educational school and taught poetry and short stories to grade nine learners. There were equal numbers of speakers of English and Zulu in the classroom but the medium of instruction was English, and English was taught to learners as a home language. When teaching poetry, Cherise used a reader response approach to a poem about abuse to engage learners in discussion and focus attention on how the poem related to learners' experiences and knowledge of the topic. In the lesson, many Zulu-

speaking learners appeared to experience difficulties speaking in English but some learners did attempt answers. Learners' attention was engaged at all times and, even if learners did not answer, they did respond non-verbally, nodding, shaking their heads or shrugging their shoulders. Cherise also gave learners a worksheet to answer individually and once it was answered, she collected the worksheets for assessment. With half the class of learners experiencing difficulties using English, they appeared to find answering the worksheet difficult. Cherise failed to recognise the problem. She could have allowed safe engagement with issues and more effective learning through scaffolded group or pair-work that eventually led to individual tasks. However, the class discussion which focussed on the learner as an active maker of meaning proved vibrant, with learners keen to share their knowledge and experiences of abuse. Thus, learners wanted to share verbally but could not contribute in writing.

Before teaching the short story in her second lesson, Cherise put learners into groups to work on role-plays related to the themes in the story. After four groups had presented their role-plays and the class had discussed them, she read the story to the class. Learners then determined the extent to which the role-plays were similar or different to the story. Of interest was the observation that all learners, irrespective of their competence in English, were able to engage in the role-plays and seemed to feel more comfortable speaking in role. Cherise then asked learners to work in pairs to write a one-paragraph summary of the story. Cherise indicated that she enjoyed teaching the lesson and learners appeared to be engaged in the lesson.

However, the mentor teacher indicated to Cherise and the researcher that she did not like the strategies used in Cherise's classroom and that Cherise needed to keep lessons 'simple'. The mentor teacher also noted that the learners were too young for the strategies Cherise wanted to use and that she 'allowed it for the lecturer's crits' but did not want Cherise to use the strategies at other times. She noted that 'group-work doesn't work. It just gets chaotic' and 'role-play is okay for older kids or maybe for the little ones. Not for grade nines'. This was despite the fact that learners appeared totally engaged in the lesson and were seen to enjoy it. The situation at Cherise's school seemed to confirm Giroux's (2009) observation that schools encourage the use of established, traditional practices, discourage democratic processes, and thus perpetuate inequalities.

In a private meeting with Cherise, the researcher advised her to follow her mentor teacher's advice as student teachers were guests at the school and in the classroom, and thus needed to abide by the rules and practices of the school and teacher. In addition, the mentor teacher's report would determine if Cherise passed Teaching Practice or not. Cherise's response was, 'Are you asking me to play the game? You are the last person I would expect to say that. I can't teach like her'. After discussing what Cherise understood 'playing the game' to mean, she was reminded that it was commendable that she could recognise the shortcomings of the teacher's practices and that she could ensure that in her own classes, from the following year onwards, she engaged learners and challenged them to think critically. It was also commendable that Cherise had the courage and conviction to challenge what she perceived as an unfair request from the researcher. While Field and Field's (1994) study on student teachers and their mentor teachers found that student teachers often kept their disagreements with their mentor teachers to themselves for fear of being unfavourably judged, Cherise was attempting to make known her practices and disposition to her mentor teacher, despite the possible negative consequences. Walkington (2005) also found that student teachers received hostile responses when using approaches that were new to their mentor teachers. Walkington identified that student teachers and teacher mentors brought their own values and beliefs to the learning situation and thus the potential for conflict was high. However, there was a need on the part of both student teachers and teacher mentors to manage and use their differences effectively for successful learning outcomes.

#### **6.2.3.1.5. Antjie**

Antjie worked in a very well-resourced school and taught poetry to grade nine boys. Except for two boys whose home language was Zulu, the other boys spoke English at home. However, the two Zulu-speaking boys had been to English-medium schools from pre-school and appeared to have no difficulties understanding or speaking English. At the first lesson, Antjie read the poem to the class and they followed the reading of the poem in their books. She then engaged in a very brief discussion about the meaning of the poem by asking three discrete questions, which required lower order thinking skills, to the learners. She then proceeded to hand out worksheets to the boys who were asked to answer the worksheets individually. The rest of the lesson was used to answer the worksheet questions but learners answered the questions in about ten minutes. For the rest of the lesson Antjie struggled to

keep learners quiet or occupied, and the lesson descended into Antjie shouting at the learners and the learners trying to annoy Antjie. The researcher's report to Antjie outlined all the concerns that emerged from the framework and management of the lesson, and the researcher spent time with Antjie to identify what went wrong. It was not helpful that Antjie insisted that the learners were 'too naughty' and 'they were always so restless'. She believed that her lesson would have been engaging and effective if the learners 'behaved properly'. The researcher needed to unpack Antjie's lesson to point out why it went wrong, and then the next lesson was considered in terms of the researcher's comments. It was significant that Antjie was prepared to engage with each comment and then apply the suggestions to activities that could effectively engage learners.

The second lesson was significantly more effective than the first. Antjie read the poem out to the class. She had divided the poem and asked learners to read different parts of the poem. She then asked them to read the poem silently to understand what the poem was about. She then engaged the class in discussions on the poem using practical criticism and a reader response approach. At one stage, she initiated a brief discussion of the poem using a marxist literary perspective. After learners appeared to understand the poem, she put up a chart outlining the divisions in the poem and explained to the class that they were to engage with the poem using a choral verse. The boys were put into groups and started preparing for their choral verse presentations, which were to be assessed in the next lesson. They were also given a worksheet to answer for the next lesson. The second lesson indicated that the boys needed to be actively engaged at all times and appeared to prepare for the choral verse presentation diligently.

At the first visit, Antjie's mentor was not available as she was standardising grade twelve portfolios at another school and thus the researcher could not discuss Antjie's progress. However, Antjie indicated that the mentor was 'very helpful' and 'empowering' and that she (Antjie) would discuss the suggestions with her teacher mentor. After the second visit, the teacher mentor thanked the researcher for the input at the first lesson and agreed with all the comments. She also indicated that she had assisted Antjie to deal with managing the learners and engaging them in the lessons.

#### **6.2.3.1.6. Rukaya**

Rukaya taught a novel to a grade nine co-educational class in a poorly resourced school. Even though the medium of instruction was English and learners were studying English as a home

language, more than half the class were not speakers of English as a home language. When Rukaya got to the school she was told that her mentor was very ill and that she needed to take over all his lessons. He had indicated that, as he had completed most chapters in the novel, she needed to work with the last three chapters. Very little guidance other than that was provided. She did approach other teachers teaching English to grade nine learners and they had assisted her.

At the first lesson that the researcher observed, Rukaya was in the process of completing the novel. After discussions focussing on characters, events and themes, she asked learners to get into groups of four and create an effective dust cover for the novel. She had asked learners to bring in magazines and she provided paper, glue sticks and additional magazines. Rukaya went to each group and asked questions, answered their questions and made suggestions. Learners were told that they would need to have their covers ready for the next lesson and would need to defend their creations. The lesson revealed an effective means for assessing learners' knowledge of the novel, and learners were forced to make choices and pass judgements on the novel in their creation and defence of their dust covers.

Lesson two focussed on assessing learners' knowledge of the novel. The lesson was introduced by referring to a film that had recently been on the movie circuit. As Rukaya asked questions, it became clear that learners were unable to respond as they had not seen the movie. Rukaya, realising that her lesson was unable to get off the ground asked, 'Don't you go to the movies?' There was little response from the learners and she asked, 'How many of you go to the movies?' Learners mumbled and shifted uneasily and it became clear that learners did not go to the movies. She then proceeded with the main part of a lesson which she created to serve as a game learners would play and would thus assess their knowledge of the novel. The game was very innovative and took many hours to create and set up, but it worked on the assumption that learners knew what a computer play-station was. When learners, who were trying to contribute to the lesson, were asked, 'How would you rate your skill at playing play-station games?' the lesson stalled to a halt again. Rukaya then said, 'Don't tell me you don't play play-station games. Come on, everybody plays play-station'. Learners did not answer and Rukaya then proceeded to explain how the game worked which appeared to make very little sense to them. She even got them to play the game and learners failed at it mostly because they had no idea what they were supposed to do. The lesson ended and very little was achieved. In fact, much damage was done to the learners. Rukaya's lesson demonstrated that she tried to conduct a lesson based on her own ideas of learners' prior

knowledge, failed to recognise who her learners were, and tried to impose a set of ideas on learners, resulting in their being confused and embarrassed by their lack of material resources. The lesson highlighted Giroux's (2009) warning that teachers need to refrain from operating from a pre-determined set of rules and ideas. In contrast, they need to know who their learners are before they proceed with their lessons.

#### **6.2.3.1.7. Nandi**

Nandi taught grade ten learners at a very poorly-resourced co-educational school and they were all speakers of Zulu as a home language and English as a first additional language. She taught short stories to learners but she was the only one with a book. The first lesson comprised Nandi reading the story to learners who listened to her read. At the end of the reading, she wrote a summary of the story on the chalkboard and asked learners to copy it into their notebooks. While they copied down the notes, she sat at her desk and watched them, reprimanding learners if they talked to each other. When they had copied down the notes, she asked them three discrete, closed questions that they answered as a group. The most common answer was 'Yes' and Nandi's voice dominated the classroom. Nandi used strategies that participants of the study were asked to avoid at all costs. She failed to engage the learners and fed them information. As Freire (1970) would have noted, she banked information in learners. Like at Lwazi's school, there was a cane on the teacher's desk. Nandi noted that the cane belonged to the teacher and indicated that 'most' teachers used the cane liberally. She also noted that learners would only 'do their work and behave' if the cane was used. Nandi's comments indicated that learners are being conditioned to believe that good work and good behaviour are determined by force. Any form of intrinsic motivation appeared to be absent. Nandi pointed out, however, that she did not use the cane.

On reviewing Nandi's first lesson with her, she was aware that she had failed to engage the learners and provide opportunities for them to think. She indicated that she had tried other methods but had discarded them. She chose to use specific strategies because 'all the teachers taught this way'. Nandi was thus trying to fit into the practices and ethos of the school even though it was detrimental to her learners. She indicated that she had observed her mentor teacher and other teachers teach, and they used rote-learning and memorisation, in the main. Nandi's choices of teaching strategies seem to attest to McPherson's (2000) finding that teachers often imitate their colleagues. On reflection, Nandi recognised how she could have

presented the lesson so that she engaged learners, while still not deviating greatly from the way learners were usually taught.

She indicated that she intended teaching a poem for the following observed lesson and many ideas and strategies were discussed. She did note that learners had no textbooks so she decided that she would print the poem on a chart and put it up on the chalkboard (the school had restricted printing facilities and could not print copies of the poem). Nandi required extra assistance from the researcher because her mentor teacher had not visited Nandi's classroom, watched her teach, nor looked at any lesson plans. This was despite the mentor teacher being aware that she needed to mentor Nandi, and would need to write reports on individual lessons and an overall report on Nandi's time at the school. The researcher was unable to meet the mentor teacher as she was away from school on the days the researcher visited and the secretary could provide no reasons for the absences. The principal was also absent from school and Nandi noted, 'I don't know who he is. I haven't seen him. The teachers say he has a business'. The researcher asked Nandi to inform her mentor teacher of her plans to teach poetry and discuss the strategies she intended using. Nandi was also asked to refer to her lecture notes on ways to teach in an engaging and effective manner.

In the second lesson, Nandi taught a short story again, despite preparing, with the researcher, for a poetry lesson. While the lesson was very similar to the previous lesson, she did incorporate more open-ended questions to the class. However, she often did not listen to their answers and merely moved on to the next question. On being asked why she had refrained from teaching poetry, she indicated that her mentor teacher asked her not to teach poetry because 'they didn't do poetry'. Even though Nandi showed her the curriculum requirements, the mentor teacher noted that poetry was done only in grade twelve, an external leaving examination. Nandi informed the researcher that grade twelve learners did not read the poems but, instead, were given summaries of the poems that needed to be studied. When Nandi asked if she could try to teach poetry differently, she was refused permission and at the end of that day, Nandi was called to the Languages Head of Department's office where he commended her decision to teach poetry, indicated that poetry was important for learners, and noted that he loved poetry. However, he informed her that if she wanted to teach poetry she could ask learners to stay after school to do it. Nandi noted that some learners had indicated their willingness to stay after school and she was considering how to implement a poetry programme.

While the researcher could understand the lack of resources as being a factor in the way the school was run, the fact that the mentor teacher and principal were regularly absent could point to learners being left unattended and to poor school leadership. Jansen (2011) asserts that many South African schools have settled for a culture of mediocrity, and Vavi (2011) takes the point further by referring to working-class South African learners in particular who are exposed to a deficient education system that lacks many resources, including good teachers.

### 6.2.3.2. Theme 2: Using issues to challenge and critique

Findings related to participants' perceptions and experiences of using issues to challenge and critique were elicited from observations in the lecture-room and school classrooms, and from student evaluations.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	36	4	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	10	30	
12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	12	8	20

#### Theme 2: Using issues to challenge and critique: Table X

The student evaluations indicated that all participants believed that important issues were raised through the study of the text (Question 10) and that writing tasks in pairs and groups were considered useful to their thinking (Question 11). However, half the group of participants indicated an unsure response to the statement: The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow (Question 12). The other half either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'. While no participant had indicated a 'disagree' response, the finding indicated that half the group was uncertain about how they felt about the usefulness of the lectures to show participants how to make their learners grow.

The lecture-room observations seemed to contradict the student evaluations. Throughout the lectures, participants were challenged to consider how they would apply issues and concepts to their own classrooms. For example, when dealing with issues of the power of certain groupings in the novel and in the customs, rituals and beliefs that emanated from such

groupings, participants were able to identify and challenge references to stereotypes about groups. Participants were also able to evaluate the structures and values that constructed and maintained the society represented in the novel. In addition, they were able to identify examples of chauvinism, bigotry and injustice in the novel, and could recognise the significance of the many points of view to understanding the story. Thus, participants understood Ladson-Billings (2009) assertion that participants confront negative perceptions of groups of people, and critique norms, structures and situations that produce and reproduce inequalities. They also recognised bias and prejudice (Allen 1997) and the roles played by cultural and social forces in a text (Monkman, MacGillivaray and Levya 2003). In addition, they comprehended Ciardiello's (2004) suggestion that participants recognise the multiple perspectives in a novel. Thus, they could engage very effectively with the issues in the text.

Despite half the participants indicating in their student evaluations that they were not sure of the usefulness of the lectures to show participants how to make their learners grow, the lecture-room discussions indicated otherwise. Participants were able to explain how they would engage learners in their classrooms to confront similar issues. Of importance to participants and the researcher was the suggestion by many participants that teachers need to take cognisance of who their learners are and what their learners bring to the classroom, and teachers need to use learners' histories and realities when planning and presenting their lessons. This idea reinforces Bartolome's (2009) suggestion that teachers use the history, perspectives and realities of learners before preparing and presenting their lessons.

The lecture-room observations showed that participants also brought their own histories, perspectives and realities to the lecture-room and were able to relate to actions and events in the novel. When dealing with the issue of Ammu's divorce, a participant noted, 'That's how Indian people behave. They want you to remain in the marriage or it's such a shame to the family'. Another pointed to the actions of the Communist party in the novel and related them to the actions and behaviour of politicians in South Africa, saying, 'The political representatives... they say this and that to you. We will give you, you know. They say it but it doesn't happen'. A third participant pointed to the double standards regarding males and females in the novel by stating, 'It's like my brother and me...he can do things and I can't. And I'm older than him'. Many participants noted the struggles experienced by the characters in the novel regarding race by highlighting how characters in the novel were in awe of White characters and aped White cultural values and norms, while declaring their opposition to British colonial rule. A participant noted that she knew people, 'even in this class who act

white. And then they say we fought for freedom'. By the last lecture on the novel, participants were questioning their own identities and what comprised each one of them. Issues of race, religion, culture, nationality, region and gender were considered as possible contributors, among others, to a person's identity. It was important for participants to think about their identities as they journeyed towards becoming teachers and created their new identities. Whether the new identities included change agency was yet to be seen.

In the school classrooms, the researcher observed lessons to ascertain what issues participants highlighted to challenge learners' views. Besides gender, race and identity, Beena also highlighted issues of customs, rituals, and religion in her lessons that focussed on the clash of old, traditional ways of living and modernity. Her insistence on learners' interrogating, analysing, synthesising and evaluating information ensured that learners grappled with the issues under discussion. Lwazi's focus was on characters' choices and how decisions are made, and he also delved into learners' choices in life and on issues of identity. Besides class, identity and gender, Liz also focussed on issues of love (including love at first sight, forbidden love and arranged marriages), family rivalry, gang rivalry, and tolerance in her lessons on *Romeo and Juliet*. Despite being warned against dealing with issues that the mentor teacher considered inappropriate for learners, Cherise got learners to grapple with issues of gender, class, race and prejudice, and learners engaged with the issues with conviction. However, Cherise did indicate that she would not highlight those issues in lessons for her mentor teacher. In her two poetry lessons, Antjie very briefly focussed on class issues but she did get learners to consider and make decisions about issues of masculinity, the ego, and greed. While Rukaya briefly focussed on the impact of parents on children's lives in her first lesson, her second lesson failed to address any issues because the lesson, which failed to recognise who the learners were, could not start.

Finally, Nandi made no attempt to address any issues with her learners who were not engaged in the lesson. Nandi's class comprised approximately sixty learners. A line of male learners in the back rows of the classroom appeared to be much older than the age range of the rest of the class and they slouched over their desks and did not appear to be interested in the lesson. However, at one point in the lesson on a short story which dealt with South Africa's brutal past, a learner from the back row put up his hand and said very animatedly, 'The same thing ... it happened in my section (of a township). The people... they went after this man. They said he was *impimpi* (informer). He said he was like us but he was ... *impimpi*. The people wanted

to kill him...’. Nandi immediately stopped him with ‘I don’t want to talk politics. And you must speak English, not *impimpi*, say ... like ... spy’.

The learner stopped speaking and a potential teaching moment passed. It is possible that the learner will not attempt a contribution again. The participant could have used the learner’s story to challenge and critique issues that emerged, but she failed to recognise the moment. Instead, she criticised his choice of subject matter and his use of a Zulu word. The potential for discussion and interaction was removed by the participant interrupting and stopping a learner’s sharing of an event that shaped his life. The participant failed to recognise that knowledge is produced through active engagement and dialogue, is grounded in the experiences of learners, and is learner-driven (Ellsworth 1989; Lather 1998; Giroux 2009).

**6.2.3.3. Theme 3: Addressing change agency**

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	40	
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	11	29

**Theme 3: Addressing change agency: Table Y**

The student evaluations indicated that the lectures made participants think about themselves as teachers in a classroom (Question 13). This was verified by the lecture-room observations. In this cycle, participants were aware that they would be embarking on Teaching Practice at a school for the last time before they graduated and entered their own classrooms (they also went on Teaching Practice in their second and third years). Their written tasks also provided interesting insights. Participants were asked to consider the following question:

*This novel contains issues that might be considered controversial or uncomfortable. How would you handle controversial or uncomfortable issues should they arise from the literature you teach your learners?*

Their responses comprised three themes: facing issues head on; avoiding issues that were considered controversial or uncomfortable to handle; and focussing on the characteristics of the class without answering the question. Eighteen participants noted that they would facilitate engagement with the issues and suggested discussing the issues with learners, giving them questions to answer in writing and then developing their answers in class discussions, using scenarios and role-plays to stimulate discussion, and even providing information to learners, should the need arise. A participant noted, ‘Learners must practice making decisions

and the classroom must be a safe, enabling place where they can speak freely about controversial issues'. Another noted, 'When we talk about controversial or uncomfortable issues, learners must be encouraged to contribute and must know that their unique contributions are valued'. The eighteen participants seemed aware that there is a need to move away from Anstey and Bull's (2006) finding that in schools, learners are socialised and controlled into working out what the 'correct' answers are supposed to be. Like the participants, Kudlick (1999) encourages teachers to establish a classroom based on trust and respect so that learners are empowered to contribute freely. The participants seemed to realise that exploring responses, taking risks and making mistakes are important to the learning process.

Eight participants indicated that they would avoid the issues because some issues 'make learners uncomfortable'; 'are best left for parents to discuss'; and 'create problems in the class'. A participant noted, 'Depending on the issue, I might ignore it. Is it our jobs to show learners those things? Teach what you can. They will Table out the rest'. Thus, the eight participants' comments indicated that they intend imposing their values on learners regarding levels of acceptability, the roles and functions of teachers and parents, and perceived outcomes of engaging with controversial or uncomfortable issues.

Another participant shared, 'I will allow discussion on certain issues, but I will need to stop learners when they start discussions that are beyond them. It's not that I will stop them from sharing their views but they must know what's acceptable in the classroom'. The participant's comments indicate conflicting responses. While discussion would be allowed, only certain issues would be acceptable. While learners would be asked to share views, the teacher needed to control what was acceptable, and the participant made it clear that certain issues would be avoided. As hooks (1989) notes, teachers cannot claim to encourage freedom of expression while, at the same time, silencing, censoring and suppressing views. In many South African classrooms, large learner numbers in classrooms could persuade teachers to discourage learners' sharing of ideas. However, if education is going to produce an active, informed citizenry, then democracy, agency and voice have to be encouraged in all classrooms.

Twelve participants focussed on the characteristics of the classroom to determine their actions. Participants noted, for example, that 'the discussion of race would be sensitive in a mixed race classroom'; 'some things can't be discussed with young learners'; 'we need to be careful of what we say to girls and boys regarding gender'; and 'we have to be aware of the

economic status of learners before we assume things'. While participants were aware of the importance of knowing who their learners were (Giroux 2009), they did not deal with the question asked of them and instead pointed to the determinants that shaped the discussion process. In many ways, they avoided confronting the question.

Participants were not as confident in their responses to the following statement in the student evaluations: The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom (Question 14). Almost two thirds of the participants indicated an 'agree' response with just under a third indicating a 'strongly agree' response. While no participant was unsure or disagreed with the statement, they could not say with conviction that the lectures made them think about themselves as potential change agents in their classrooms.

Participants had been through four cycles in the study aimed at becoming agents of change. While they indicated their commitment to and belief in becoming agents of change, their potentiality needed to be assessed by persons working closely with them in their classrooms. For this reason, mentor teachers were asked to rate their student teachers as potential agents of change during Teaching Practice. The concept of 'agent of change' was discussed with mentor teachers and clarity was provided, if necessary. The participants were also asked to rate themselves.

The mentor teachers of Beena, Lwazi and Liz subscribed to the idea that the three participants would become agents of change in their classrooms. While Lwazi and Liz indicated that they believed that they would be agents of change in their classrooms, Beena noted that she would become an agent of change 'with time, I hope'. While Cherise's mentor teacher responded, 'No, no, no. She won't be. She can't ... you know ... stick to the rules. She wants to do things her way', Cherise believed that she could make a difference to her learners. She noted, 'I want to make a significant difference to them. They must actually learn something and they must leave my classroom thinking and feeling, you know, passionate about life'. Antjie's mentor teacher was guarded in her response, noting, 'She'll get there. Not just yet. But she can with good guidance. She still needs to settle in and find her way'. Initially, Antjie could not answer the question and then noted, 'I really don't know'. While Rukaya said she 'might be' an agent of change 'with time', Nandi said that she 'would try, but it's too hard'. Rukaya and Nandi conducted their lessons without their mentor teachers being present at their lessons, and the researcher, too, did not have an opportunity to meet with the mentor teachers so could not ascertain their views. Overall, only three of the seven participants believed, at this stage, that

they would serve as agents of change, despite the opposite response to the question in earlier cycles. In Kaufman and McDonald's (1992) study, too, all student teachers initially felt that they would serve as agents of change. As their focus moved to building their knowledge of the subject content and the pedagogical tools, they lost focus, and believed the aim of change agency was overwhelming. Student teachers then had to re-focus their attention to the issue of change agency and they all regained their confidence in their abilities to serve as agents of change. Thus, the researcher realised that more active engagement with the concept of change agency needed to be undertaken in the following cycles.

#### **6.2.4. Reflections and decisions made**

Reflections on cycle four, including Teaching Practice, with the entire group revealed that participants felt confident engaging in lecture-room activities. They worked co-operatively and effectively with other participants, and the researcher noted that they appeared to demonstrate a protective stance towards each other. They also seemed very comfortable sharing ideas. Participants noted that the lecture-room environment was nurturing and supportive, and thus agency, voice and participation were allowed to thrive. This cycle also saw participants demonstrating a proficient knowledge of technology in using the internet and working with computer software. They suggested the use of debates and problem-solving activities and affirmed their need for greater independence in finding resources for themselves. While all participants recognised the need for independence and self-sufficiency, some of them failed to do the work to enable such qualities. Thus, they knew what needed to be done, but could not implement the beliefs.

On reflecting on the cycle, participants indicated that they wanted greater engagement with issues of gender and patriarchy in the following cycle. What was significant in both their personal development and for the study was that participants could suggest, without prompting, what they needed to move towards becoming effective engaged teachers who could use issues in literary texts to enable their learners to grow. Thus, participants seemed to be gaining agency and voice, and they were becoming comfortable using a process of reflection. While many participants re-affirmed their beliefs that they could serve as agents of change, they asked for engagement with the concept so that they could move beyond content and pedagogy to re-focussing their thinking on becoming agents of change.

The researcher reflected on the Teaching Practice experience with participants. She found that while all participants articulated their belief in using effective, engaging, interactive teaching

strategies, some participants did not involve their learners in the teaching and learning process. While many participants used innovative co-operative learning strategies, others chose to teach as other teachers in the school taught. Teaching Practice illustrated that mentor teachers played important roles in determining how student teachers understood their functions in their future schools. The researcher found that while some schools seemed to work hard to enable effective teaching and learning, other schools appeared to be deficient with ineffective teachers.

Finally, the researcher shared two concerns with the group. The first related to the use of English in schools. Participants considered the extent to which the uses of English as a medium of instruction helped second language learners learn the language. They also discussed the extent to which the mother tongue was being marginalised by using English as a medium of instruction. Many views were put forth but no definitive answers were found. The second concern was corporal punishment which appeared to be accepted in many schools. An exploration of the issue revealed contrasting views but participants affirmed their commitment to refraining from using corporal punishment. It was impossible to predict if participants would maintain their commitment or change their stances should the ethos of their schools prove compelling.

### 6.3. Cycle five

#### 6.3.1. Participants’ profiles

Figures related to race, gender, home language and age of participants who registered for the English Education Major 420 module in semester two of the study indicate that approximately two-thirds of the participants in the group were female and one-third was male. Just under two-thirds spoke English and just over one-third spoke Zulu as their home languages. The majority of participants were aged between twenty one and twenty four. Just over half the class were classified Indian, over a third was classified as African, and Whites and Coloureds comprised the remainder. The predominance of female, English-speaking participants in their early twenties characterised the group.

English Education Major 420: Semester 2: 35 students

Race

Indian	African	White	Coloured	Other
18	13	2	2	NIL
51%	37%	6%	6%	0%

Gender

Female	Male
23	12
66%	34%

Home Language

English	IsiZulu	South Sotho	Xhosa	North Sotho
22	13	0	0	0
63%	37%	0%	0%	0%

Age

Age	Number of students
21- 28	33
31	2

**Race, gender, home language, age: Table Z**

**6.3.2. Engagement with *Much Ado about Nothing* by Kenneth Branagh (1993)**

Cycle five worked with Kenneth Branagh’s film *Much Ado about Nothing* using reader response, marxist, feminist and critical theories to consider the issues that arose from the film. The two-week cycle deliberated on the narrative structure and the various issues that emerged from the film. Such issues included women as marriageable commerce, questions of gender inequality, and class, among others. The participants also read the film by considering the staging, cinematography, editing, and sound.

Participants also considered how to work with the film using different teaching and learning strategies that they could employ in their classrooms. Participants were offered two viewings of the film outside lecture hours and they could borrow the film from the library as well. Participants worked as a class, individually, in pairs and in groups to interrogate film clips, transcripts of interviews with the director and film crew, and various critiques of the film, which participants had to provide. They also debated issues that emerged from the film. The following issues were debated: *Shakespeare’s attitude towards sexuality is reflective of attitudes today; People should marry persons of a similar social and economic status as themselves; Men are attracted to women who are assertive, confident and forthright; Because*

*parents usually know what is best for their children, children should accept their parents' choices when choosing a partner.*

This cycle extended the discussion on the concept 'agent of change' in the light of the issues that emerged from the film. The class also considered how they would serve as agents of change, and they produced written work on the topic by considering a question posed to them.

### **6.3.3. Data collection, findings and interpretations**

A focus group (See Appendix I), written work, and student evaluations (See Appendix O) were used in cycle five to ascertain the effects of the interventions on participants. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the various data collection methods: Accessing and assessing strategies; Using issues to help learners grow; and Grappling with agency.

#### **6.3.3.1. Theme 1: Accessing and assessing strategies**

The focus group provided the first opportunity for participants to discuss their Teaching Practice experiences with the researcher. However, the eight participants in the focus group were not the participants that the researcher observed during Teaching Practice. A participant noted how she had accessed all her resources and researched all her information prior to her Teaching Practice. She noted, 'It made life easy. You drummed it into us to be prepared and it worked'. Another noted that when she heard she had to teach Shakespeare, she went out and hired the film to 'hear how the words are spoken. I wanted to be able to speak the lines with expression, you know, well'. Thus, participants recognised the importance of being prepared for their teaching. Others indicated that they used role-plays to teach novels, poetry to introduce novels, expressive dramatic readings to 'make the text come alive for learners', 'pair-work that was easy to control', and the technique of stopping at key places in the text 'to create suspense'. A participant explained to the group how she used the strategy of teacher-in-role and noted, 'I was scared. It was a big risk, but it went well and the learners loved it'. A participant also explained that he made a one-minute DVD of the poem he taught. He noted,

I read the poem out, used simple images from the Net and added music. The learners were like... wow. They wanted to know how I did it and I showed them some techniques. My mentor asked me to teach her, but she couldn't get it. I don't think she wanted to.

While the comments from the participant seemed to indicate that the mentor teacher did not want to learn and change her practices, what is important is that the learners and the

participant recognised the effectiveness of the strategy. Thus, participants appeared able to use effective strategies to engage their learners, and even when they took risks with their choice of strategies, they felt in control of their practices. Thus, participants knew innovative, interactive teaching strategies, were able to use them in classrooms, and could possibly become effective, engaged teachers.

Finally, participants were asked if the study had any effect on them thus far. A participant revealed,

The best part of the study is the freedom, the liberty to speak, and share your opinions. I tried to get my learners to speak their minds. I encouraged them to try even if they got it wrong. That's what you say to us. It's what I'll remember.

The comment indicated the important aspect of democratic participation. The participant understood that the opportunity to share opinions enabled him/her to have a voice. More importantly, the participant recognised the importance of enabling learners to have a voice in the classroom. Thus, participants appeared to be more confident as future teachers (than in previous cycles) and seemed to understand what was required of them if they were to be effective, engaged teachers of literature.

However, there were some reservations expressed by the focus group participants. Two participants noted that their mentor teachers did not want student teachers to teach literature. While it is understandable that some mentor teachers might experience uncertainty in allowing student teachers to teach sections of the English syllabus, the aim of Teaching Practice is to enable student teachers to teach all aspects of the subject. It is possible that mentor teachers perceive the letting go of their literature classes as losing control of their classes or subject, or they could have had negative experiences of student teachers teaching literature in the past and were thus unwilling to relinquish their classes.

A participant also indicated that her mentor teacher said, 'Avoid group-work'. A mentor teacher advising against group-work is also understandable. If managed poorly, group-work can be counter-productive to the aims of the lesson. However, the benefits of properly managed group-work involves active learning where learners are involved in activities by doing things and thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell and Eison 1991). Golub (1988) points out that when learners talk during group-work, they are involved in the learning process. Co-operation, teamwork and a responsibility for results become the learners' aims.

A participant pointed out that memorisation and rote-learning were the only strategies that teachers at that particular school used, and three participants spoke of the use of corporal punishment with one noting,

By the end of the four weeks, I was so used to seeing learners catching it. I don't think they bother any more. Teachers hit, learners take it and carry on doing the same thing.

The teachers... they only talk with the cane.

The findings in the focus group that participants observed teachers using memorisation, rote-learning and corporal punishment were cause for concern. It is clear that the schools mentioned embarked on illegal practices. If participants themselves experienced such schools as learners, it is possible that they would reproduce such practices in their own classrooms. If they entered schools where such practices were common, they might believe that they need to conform to the practices in the school. Many studies (Lortie 1975; Gore and Zeichner 1991; McPherson 2000; Anstey and Bull 2006) indicate that teachers' own histories of schooling and their need to successfully integrate into the ethos of the school at which they are teaching have a much greater impact than traditional teacher education programmes. It thus became imperative for the study to draw participants' attention to the findings and to enable them to make more conscious choices and consider alternative practices.

Student evaluations were also used to ascertain how participants experienced the strategies used in the lecture-room. The results of the thirty participants who completed the student evaluations indicated that all participants who filled in student evaluations believed strongly that the lecturer was well prepared (Question 1), asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7), and had a good relationship with the class (Question 9). In addition, all participants strongly believed that the lectures were clear and well delivered (Question 2), participants felt comfortable participating in class (Question 8) and they all enjoyed the lectures (Question 15). The majority of participants indicated a 'strongly agree' response to the statement that the lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated participants' enthusiasm for the subject (Question 4).

However, two thirds of the group indicated an 'agree' response and one third indicated a 'strongly agree' response to the statement that they understood the language used by the lecturer (Question 3). While no participant was unsure or disagreed with the statement, the finding indicated that two-thirds of the participants were not totally convinced that they understood the lecturer's language. This was despite the majority of participants indicating a

‘strongly agree’ response that they understood the language used by the lecturer in the previous four cycles. It is possible that the use of technical film terms, which were introduced in cycle two and expanded on in this cycle, was not adequately engaged with by the lecturer. It is also possible that she assumed participants’ knowledge of technical terms introduced in cycle two and needed, instead, to revise such terms. This finding points to the recognition that all teachers, at any level, need to ascertain participants’ background knowledge before embarking on building their knowledge.

Similarly, while just over a quarter of the group strongly agreed that the teaching strategies helped them understand the film, just less than three-quarters of the group indicated that they agreed (Question 5). Again, the responses indicated a lack of strong conviction in the ability of the teaching strategies to help them understand the film. The teaching strategies used in this cycle included class discussions, group and pair-work, debates, problem-solving activities, and working with film clips, film critiques and interviews with key personnel from the film. The result indicated that there was a measure of uncertainty in participants’ minds regarding the usefulness of the strategies to help them understand the film. It was thus imperative for the researcher to consider alternate strategies for future lectures and to canvas participants’ opinions during reflections on the cycle.

The final result focussed on the statement: I know how to implement these strategies in my classroom (Question 6). There was an equal number of participants who indicated an ‘agree’ response as there were those who indicated a ‘strongly agree’ response. In addition, six participants (20%) noted that they were unsure. While no participant disagreed, six participants indicated that, if they had to teach films to their learners in schools the following year, they were uncertain how to proceed. The equal numbers of those who agreed as those who strongly agreed indicated that 80% of participants believed in varying degrees that they would know how to teach films to their classes, should they need to.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral / not sure/ don't know
1. The lecturer was well prepared.	30		
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	30		
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	10	20	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	25	5	

5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	8	22	
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	12	12	6
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	30		
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	30		
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	30		
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	30		

**Theme 1: Accessing and assessing strategies: Table AA**

**6.3.3.2. Theme 2: Using issues to help learners grow**

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	10	20	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	11	19	
12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	2	26	2

**Theme 2: Using issues to help learners grow: Table BB**

The table indicates that the majority of participants agreed that important issues were raised through the study of the film (Question 10), that writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to their thinking (Question 11), and that the lectures showed them how to make their learners grow (Question 12). However, the extent of their agreement differed, indicating that participants, while acknowledging their agreement, were questioning the extent of it. It is possible that participants were able to critique the study and its aims and thus were able to recognise the extent to which the study could work. It is also possible that participants were becoming much more aware of the fact that they were to go into classrooms in under six months time and needed to consciously assess their answers to such questions.

The focus group, too, revealed careful engagement with the question of using issues to help learners to grow. When referring to the film *Much Ado about Nothing*, a participant noted how she found herself deciding on ‘events in the film and how Branagh decided to depict the characters. He was depicting Shakespeare’s view, too, about women and men and the ... injustices’. Another added,

I also think that he was pushing a view. He played it safe, staying away from the real issues. I mean, what's with that whole Hero thing? It was abuse and yet it was forgiven with very few consequences.

A third added, 'It was such a lovely film but I look at it now and say ... there's more ... we must deal with it in our classes. Otherwise, what's the point?' Other participants picked up on the portrayal of women in terms of their class with a participant stating, 'We can't de-file the rich missy but it was okay with the servant, Margaret'.

A further comment focussed on the role of men with a participant observing,

The father decides. He gives her away. The man ... Claudio decides he doesn't want her. He kicks her out. Then he finds out the truth and gets her back. I know Beatrice is strong in a way but everyone just follows the orders of men. So Shakespeare was saying, women, just shut up and agree.

Other participants also highlighted the role of the state, in the form of Don Pedro, in perpetuating patriarchy and pointed to issues of exploitation in terms of gender and class. The participants' responses in the focus group indicated that they were able to judge events and characters, understand the choices made in the film and highlight social justice issues. They were also able to critique structures and institutions that produced and reproduced the social order (Ladson-Billings 2009). They appeared to be conscientised about how and why texts are created (Ciardiello 2004), how authors characterise people and ideas and endorse particular views (Johnson and Freedman 2005), and how portrayals and representations in texts advantage certain groups (Habermas 1972). Thus, they were able to recognise the role of the author and the choices he made when creating a text.

Finally, a participant, revealed, 'This film, this whole study has made me think, has made me look at myself. The whole experience from last year has made me confront my own prejudices'. It is important that the participant recognised how the study impacted on him. It was brave of the participant to reveal to the focus group that he had biases and prejudices and that he was made to confront them. His comments indicated that his reflection provided insights into his values, practices and development as a human being. It is hoped that he will take such insights into his classroom as well.

### **6.3.3.3. Theme 3: Grappling with agency**

The table below shows that the majority of participants agreed that the lectures made them think about themselves as teachers (Question 13) and as agents of change in the classroom

(Question 14). While a vast majority of 87% of participants strongly agreed that the lectures made them think about themselves as teachers in the classroom, the scores related to change agency were not as extreme. In equal numbers, participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the lectures made them think about themselves as agents of change, and two participants were undecided. The responses to Question 13 were understandable. Participants were soon to be teachers in classrooms and thus the idea would have been uppermost in their minds. In addition, in cycle five, the researcher tried to be explicit about teaching and being a teacher during the lectures. Being an agent of change, however, meant making a tangible difference to learners’ lives and the responsibilities thereof were possibly daunting.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don’t know
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	26	4	
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	14	14	2

**Theme 3: Grappling with agency: Table CC**

In this cycle, participants were asked to answer the following question:

*This film has the potential to raise important issues/ values in a classroom. Which issues/ values would you raise in a school classroom and how would you raise them? What would you hope to achieve?*

Thirty participants answered the question and most indicated that they would use discussions, questions and role-plays to raise consciousness about the issues, to make learners think more deeply or differently about the issues, and to consider how the issues related to learners’ lives. Thus, participants’ choices indicated their recognition that interactive strategies are valuable to explore important issues.

The majority of participants noted that they would focus on issues of gender and patriarchy by drawing learners’ attention to ‘gender roles’; ‘gender inequalities’; ‘gender stereotypes’; and ‘sexism’. They would highlight the ‘characteristics of a patriarchal society’; ‘male domination’; ‘society’s different demands on women and men’; and ‘the internalisation of domination’. They would show learners why it was wrong to ‘represent women as valueless objects’; ‘value men above women’, and ‘collude with the cycle of oppression’. They would challenge learners to confront representations of women as ‘submissive, docile, vulnerable

people' and expectations that women should 'do what's expected of them by society'. A participant also wanted to get learners to question 'why women who are confident, forthright and able to defend themselves are seen as odd or different', and another wanted learners to evaluate the roles of women in the past and present. Thus, participants understood the importance of confronting gender norms and practices. It is possible that, should participants do the same in their classrooms, learners will also confront and challenge such issues and will prevent the perpetuation of previously accepted values and actions.

The issue of class also emerged with participants indicating that learners needed to recognise a 'structured society' where 'people were treated differently because of their class'. Others noted that they would point out the 'relationships between servants and those in power'; the fact that servants have 'very few words to say and use inferior language'; that 'the film implies that servants are expected to behave in a savage way'; and that learners 'need to treat people equally'. Class differences and class discrimination are issues that need to be confronted in South African classrooms and beyond, and thus it is important that participants recognised their importance.

Other participants focussed on 'acting in anger' and 'questioning before making decisions'. A participant wanted learners to 'make their own decisions. I would ask them: What do you want from life? How do you become responsible for your choices?' and another noted that s/he would caution learners against 'swearing that you will not do or say something'. A participant indicated that s/he would advise learners to 'realise that happily-ever-after endings happen in films. We should aim for it, but reality can be different'. Participants also highlighted issues of family values, parents as figures of authority, imposition of values, trust and forgiveness, among others. Overall, participants could recognise how they would use issues in the film to make a difference to their learners' insights and understandings of issues. If implemented carefully and sensitively in their classrooms, participants could serve as agents of change.

Participants in the focus group, too, indicated that they wanted to serve as agents of change in their classroom. However, there were many concerns expressed. A participant noted that she was unsure if she could be an agent of change and stated, 'It's very difficult. I thought about it. I don't know if I can do it'. Another mentioned that she might be 'overwhelmed by teaching - getting my materials, learning about my learners, teaching, preparing. Maybe after the first year it will get better ... easier'. A participant remarked, 'I want to teach values ...

core values, not the religious stuff. Just how to be good people. But I don't want to tell learners what they must and must not do. I hate people like that'. Participants' comments indicated that they had real concerns and anxieties around the issue of change agency and many doubted their abilities to serve as agents of change. They were also being very realistic about the demands placed on a novice teacher.

A participant observed that during Teaching Practice she 'wanted to focus on the content and methods. But I couldn't help saying, can I make a difference, how do I make a difference to their lives'. The participant's comments served to produce many similar comments from focus group participants. A participant said, 'There is always some way to make a difference. I felt guilty if I let it pass' and another noted that she 'didn't want to dwell on change in learners' lives but once you are aware, you can't avoid it'. What participants' comments indicated is that they were becoming agents of change, whether they wanted it or not. They were aware that they could not avoid making a difference to their learners' lives. Further, they were also changing and making a difference to their own lives. Thus, while they had anxieties about being agents of change, they, nevertheless, understood that they could not be otherwise.

Another comment that elicited reactions from the focus group included a statement from a participant who said, 'The study makes me think ... sometimes too much. I think about me ... as a teacher'. After much discussion, a participant noted, 'It made me think, who am I as a teacher in South Africa? We know who teachers are, but can I create my own identity? Can I break the mould?' Participants' comments reflected that they were thinking deeply about their roles not just as teachers but as teachers who wanted to make a difference. The participants' comments revealed that they were reflecting on their actions, experiences and thoughts, and were determined to forge their own identities. Their views echo those of Priestly et al. (2012) who note that an agent of change is reflective, creative and committed to change.

#### **6.3.4. Reflections and decisions made**

In the main, participants indicated that they felt confident to go into their classrooms, and they believed that they could be effective, engaged teachers of literature. They noted that they were comfortable using interactive, co-operative learning strategies, and many recognised the need to take risks in trying new strategies. While they appreciated the democratic participation,

voice and agency in the lecture-room, they also expressed a desire to enable such an environment in their own classrooms. They understood that preparation was key to successful lessons.

The researcher understood through practical experience in this cycle that she needed to reflect on who the participants were and with what knowledge they entered the lecture-room. The researcher assumed that because film study was undertaken in cycle two, participants would remember everything done in that cycle. She thus failed to revise work done previously. On asking participants how the film could be more successfully taught, participants noted that they understood the film and the issues presented therein. However, they needed to constantly remind themselves of definitions of terms used in the lectures and thus needed reminders of what was meant by different concepts. The researcher recognised the need to engage more fully with participants' understandings before proceeding with lectures.

When participants were informed that they were to study a Shakespearean play in the next cycle, they decided that a focus of the lectures should be on reading the text out aloud. They noted that reading Shakespeare silently could prove more difficult than reading it out aloud. Many suggested watching a film version of the play to see the play performed and while the researcher offered to set up viewing times for the film, most participants indicated that they would access and watch the film on their own, indicating a measure of independence.

Participants considered themselves able to use literary texts to help their learners develop academically and socially, and were able to highlight social justice issues that needed to be addressed. They believed that they were becoming more critically aware and discerning when studying literary texts and were able to question authors' choices. For the next cycle, participants suggested continuing with debates and problem-solving activities to deal with issues of race, class and gender, issues that emerge often in classrooms.

The researcher recognised growth and development in participants' ability to make choices, pose questions and reflect on their actions and words. Understandably, they were becoming older, and presumably wiser, and their educational and personal experiences, interactions with people and other factors were very likely adding to their maturity and development.

They were also committed, albeit with fears, to serving as agents of change in their classrooms. In cycle five, participants focussed very closely on becoming agents of change. While they were aware of the realities of teaching and expressed many anxieties surrounding the role and functions of change agents, they were equally convinced that they could not teach

without including aspects of change agency. They also noted that they needed to reflect on their identities as teachers. It was decided to use another research method, drawings, to ascertain participants' views on becoming agents of change and to engage with their notions of a teacher's identity.

## 6.4. Cycle six

### 6.4.1. Engagement with *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (1623 – seven years after Shakespeare's death)

Cycle six was the last cycle of the study. In this three-week cycle participants studied the play *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare and used feminist, postcolonial and critical theories to work with the text. In the lectures, participants interrogated the plot, characters and scenes to grapple with the many issues presented in the play. Such issues involved power, manipulation, encounters with indigenous peoples, the role of colonisers in enslaving and exploiting the colonised, the impact of nature and nurture, patriarchy, revenge and forgiveness, among others.

The issues were explored through many pedagogical tools. Because some participants indicated that they found the text difficult to read, the researcher used parts of lecture one to read extracts out aloud and participants were able to grasp the text more easily when they heard the words spoken. By the second lecture, both the researcher and participants read extracts out aloud, and by the third lecture, only participants read out extracts and were increasingly confident doing so. Using class, individual, pair and group-work, participants examined pictures and photographs depicting scenes from the play. They also watched film clips of specific scenes from the play and assessed the depiction of the events and characters (various versions of the film were available in the library). In addition, they examined academic articles on the play, and used debates and problem-solving activities to interrogate issues in the play. Debate topics included: *While Ariel behaves as a good servant should, Caliban does not; It was important for explorers to teach the savage people how to be civilised.* The problem-solving topic was: *If you had the chance to counsel Caliban after he agreed to be ruled by Stephano, what would you say to him?*

The issues in the text were also reflected on and participants determined how they could use such issues in classrooms where they functioned as agents of change. Issues of race, class, patriarchy, and culture were focussed on. Short written work tasks in the form of a problem-solving activity was used to interrogate the issues in the play and to determine how the issues

would serve as catalysts to move participants closer to becoming agents of change.

Participants were also asked to present a piece of extended writing to answer a question. In addition, participants were asked to represent themselves visually as teachers. This activity was used as an alternate method to determine if they saw themselves as agents of change and how they understood the concept ‘agent of change’.

**6.4.2. Data collection, findings and interpretations**

In this final cycle, interviews (See Appendix J), drawings (See Appendix M), written work, and extended student evaluations (See Appendix P) were used to ascertain the effects of the interventions and to answer the three research questions. It is important to note that, in this cycle, participants asked to be excused from data analysis, citing high workloads in their final year of study. They did note that they would comment on and verify the researcher’s findings. When participants graduated and started teaching, four of them, novice teachers, were interviewed to determine the impact, if any, of the study (see Appendix D). Again, the researcher analysed the data and the novice teachers commented on and verified the analysis. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the written work, final student evaluations, drawings and interviews: Strategies used by effective, engaged teachers of literature; Teachers’ use of literature to help their learners develop academically and socially; and Teachers becoming agents of academic and social change.

**6.4.2.1. Theme 1: Strategies used by effective, engaged teachers of literature**

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don’t know
1. The lecturer was well prepared.	32		
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	32		

3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	23	6	3
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	32		
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	11	21	
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	14	12	6
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	32		
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	32		
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	32		
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	32		

**Theme 1: Strategies used by effective, engaged teachers of literature: Table DD**

The table indicates that all participants strongly agreed that the lecturer was well-prepared (Question 1), presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated their enthusiasm for the subject (Question 4), asked questions and promoted discussion (Question 7), and had a good relationship with the class (Question 9). All participants strongly agreed that the lectures were clear and well-delivered (Question 2), they felt comfortable to participate in class (Question 8), and enjoyed the lectures (Question 15). The majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the language used by the lecturer (Question 3), that the teaching strategies used helped them to understand the text (Question 5), and that they knew how to implement the strategies in their classrooms (Question 6). Findings seem to demonstrate that the use of modelling, experiential learning and explicit teaching has been useful to participants, and thus they can use ideas from the lectures to become effective, engaged teachers of literature.

Three participants (9%) were not certain whether they understood the language used by the lecturer and six participants (19%) were uncertain of their abilities to implement the teaching strategies in their classrooms. While no participant disagreed with any statement, the participants who indicated an uncertain response were reflecting a legitimate insecurity as they prepared to leave university and move into their profession.

The individual interviews held with six participants at the end of cycle six revealed that participants believed that the study was helpful in preparing them to become effective, engaged teachers of literature. A participant explained, 'I liked when we used a methodology, then talked about it. I found that useful'. The participant was pointing to the importance of interrogating a method before moving on to another method. Another participant observed that the use of 'questions, discussions and debates' was effective in 'making me see ...

understand things that you sometimes just accept', indicating the participant's recognition of Darder, Baltodarno and Torres' (2009) contention that dialogue and conscientisation are effective in a critical pedagogy approach. Participants could identify particular strategies that they found effective and would use in their classrooms. They cited 'role-play'; 'controlled pair-work'; 'pictures, poems, newspapers'; 'DVDs'; and 'lots of talking, debates and discussions'.

Participants also pointed to other factors such as being prepared with a participant noting that she 'had to have all her ducks in a row' before she went to teach a class and another indicated that she 'wanted to be prepared but still able to adapt ... be flexible if something comes up'. This finding emphasises the findings from practising teachers used in the baseline information (Chapter four) that being both prepared and open to adaptation are essential in a classroom.

A participant believed that the most important aspect that she would take away from the study was the reminder to herself to have a sense of humour in her classroom. She stated, 'It's important ... they must have a bit of a laugh. I want to laugh with them. I've got to stop being all up-tight. It just makes life easier. You do that all the time ... make us laugh. You even make fun of yourself'. While a participant shared that he believed it was important 'to relax in a lesson. Not slack off but just chill and roll with learners', another wanted to 'be in control but not in a creepy way. I want to know where I'm going with my class but I want to be calm. The lesson must be peaceful. That's not the word, but you know what I mean'. The participants were echoing Kudlick's (1999) finding that effective teachers are those who have learnt to relax and even laugh in their classrooms. They were also emphasising Russell and Barefoot's (2010) findings (cited in Cunnane 2010) that learners identified effective and engaged teachers as being those who are positive and who make the educational experience both engaging and enjoyable.

Other participants pointed out that they wanted to use strategies to 'motivate', 'encourage' and 'inspire' their learners. A participant noted, 'It has to be a good environment. It's shocking what goes on in some of their lives. It has to be safe so they know that things can be better' and another revealed 'I want them to leave my classroom happy. I want them to want to come to my class'. Participants' comments revealed that they were aware of the harsh realities of many learners' lives and they wanted to provide classrooms that were uplifting and secure. They were echoing Meister's (2010) findings that effective teachers teach with love, grace and wisdom and treat their learners as their own.

The drawings were used as another research method to answer the research questions (See Appendix M). Participants were asked to present, in visual form, their ideas of what an ideal teacher of literature looked like and then to explain their visual images. While participants were provided with suggestions for their visual images (picture, diagram, sketch, drawing, mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea), twelve of the thirty five participants (33%) presented a drawing and twenty three participants (67%) presented either mind maps or words. It was clear that student teachers of literature were more comfortable using words than drawings.

In their drawings, mind maps and explanations of their images, participants recognised that effective, engaged teachers of literature used ‘learner-centred’ and ‘interactive’ lessons. These findings are similar to those of McKeachie et al. (1986), Bonwell and Eison (1991), and Smith and McGregor (1992) who recognise the importance of interactive, participatory, collaborative learning environments. Participants identified an ideal teacher as one who ‘asked stimulating questions’; ‘encouraged discussion’; set up ‘debates to encourage higher order thinking’; and ‘ensured that learners’ views were respected’. Participants’ views are supported by the findings of many researchers (Lowman 1984; Golub 1988; Bonwell and Eison 1991). Bonwell and Eison (1991) found that during active learning learners do things and think about what they are doing; Golub (1988) established that much learning occurs when learners talk during learning activities; and Lowman (1984) determined that effective learning works best in a supportive intellectual environment where learners are encouraged to take risks.

In their drawings, participants indicated that effective, engaged teachers were ‘creative’, and made the literature lesson ‘fun and out of the box’ by ‘engaging with learners’; ‘allowing learners to connect to the literature personally’; and ‘encouraging learners to use their imaginations’. Such teachers ‘did not spoon-feed content to learners’. These comments echo Langer’s (2001) findings that effective teachers use creative activities to challenge learners’ thinking.

In addition, the drawings revealed that the ideal teacher ‘knew content well’; ‘kept on learning new ideas’; ‘understood which literary theories underpinned her lessons’; and ‘chose texts carefully’. These views reveal that participants understood the importance of deep disciplinary knowledge and the need for life-long learning. They also echo Bender-Slack’s

(2007) view that the choice of literary texts plays a vital role in classrooms that aims for change.

According to participants' drawings and explanations, the ideal teacher of literature 'made literature come alive' by 'reading expressively to learners and encouraging them to do the same' and using 'drama'; 'images'; and 'technology such as videos and music' to enhance the lesson. Such a teacher had a 'positive, learner-friendly' classroom; had 'a sense of humour'; was 'not boring'; and 'in many ways has to be a good performer'. Participants' views reinforce those of Russell and Barefoot (2010), cited in Cunnane (2010) who found that learners find teachers effective if teachers have the ability to make the educational experience entertaining, engaging and enjoyable.

In addition, the teacher was a 'good listener' who 'did not need to hear her own voice all the time'. These views are similar to those of Kudlick (1999), who noted that effective teachers respect their learners by listening attentively to them and interacting with them. The teacher 'loved reading'; was 'able to make learners enthusiastic about reading'; 'engaged with learners if they had problems with reading'; 'surrounded learners with books that she lent to them'; and 'loved inspiring generations to pick up books and join her wonderful world of literature' (See Appendix Q for examples of participants' drawings). The comments on reading are similar to those expressed by both practising teachers and student teachers in the data from the baseline information (Chapter four), implying that the need for teachers to motivate and inspire their learners to read is considered an important issue for all groups involved in the study. Teachers and student teachers of literature recognise the poor literacy scores in South African schools (Van der Berg 2005; ANA 2011; Vavi 2011) and understand that they need to enable learners to read more effectively.

Participants also identified personal characteristics that identified an ideal teacher of literature. Such characteristics included the teacher being 'confident'; 'lively'; 'welcoming'; and 'versatile', and the teacher was a 'deep critical thinker' (See Appendix Q for examples of participants' drawings). Thus, while participants recognised the skills an ideal teacher of literature will need, they also realised the distinct characteristics that such a teacher would need. Their views indicated that participants were differentiating teachers' roles from teachers' identities.

Like the findings from the participants' visual representations, Mayer (1999, 6-8) cited in Walkington (2005) also notes that a teacher's role is distinct from a teacher's identity. While

the teacher's role includes 'things the teacher does in performing the function required of him/-her as a teacher', the teacher's identity 'is a more personal thing and indicates how one identifies with being a teacher and how one feels as a teacher' based on the 'core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher'. Thus, teachers need technical knowledge of skills to use in order to teach. However, the study contends that an effective teacher works out what his/-her core beliefs and philosophical underpinnings are and teaches from this strong base. It is believed that such core beliefs will continuously change through interactions, experiences and readings, among others. Mayer emphasises that 'it is possible to become an expert practitioner by actually doing the job, by performing the skills, but true professional teaching involves another dimension, an intellectual dimension'. Walkington (2005, 54) notes that the functions and identities of a teacher are not 'mutually exclusive' but are 'intertwined aspects of the developing professional'. This means that an effective teacher needs to constantly read, reflect on and assess his/-her practices. S/he also needs to evaluate his/-her teaching philosophy. Thus, the teacher's role and identity are dynamic and complex, and can constantly change and develop. Similarly, participants' aim to become agents of change cannot be assessed at any specific point in their journeys. Depending on contexts, opportunities and experiences, among others, participants will function as teachers while constantly re-evaluating their understandings of teaching and being a teacher.

#### **6.4.2.2. Theme 2: Teachers' use of literature to help their learners develop academically and socially**

The table that follows indicates that the majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that important issues were raised through the study of the play (Question 10), that the writing tasks in pairs or groups were useful to their thinking (Question 11), and that the lectures showed them that they could make their learners grow (Question 12). Thus, participants could recognise that literature could be used to help them (and by implication, their learners) to grow and develop academically and socially. One participant was undecided in his/-her responses to the statements involving the usefulness of the writing tasks and the ability of lectures to show the participant how to make his/-her learners grow, reflecting that one participant was uncertain about the effectiveness of the lectures and the tasks therein. While the participant did not indicate a disagree response, it is clear that the participant was not convinced that the aims of the lectures and tasks, and possibly the entire cycle, were achieved.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral /not sure/ don't know
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	13	19	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	14	17	1
12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	15	16	1

**Theme 2: Teachers’ use of literature to help their learners develop academically and socially:  
Table EE**

In terms of theme 2, (teachers’ use of literature to help their learners develop academically and socially), interviews focussed on participants’ reactions to the interventions used in cycle six and how they would use literature to help their learners develop academically and socially. While two interview participants indicated that they initially believed the play *The Tempest* would be ‘boring’ and ‘tedious’, all participants indicated that they enjoyed studying and engaging with issues in the play. Participants found being asked to appraise characters, events, speeches and concepts in the play very useful and noted that they ‘were made to see that there’s always more than one point of view’; recognised ‘the injustice that has occurred from ... forever’; detected that ‘power is not restricted to one race or gender’; understood that ‘power and power structures pervade everything’ and knew how ‘the portrayal of certain groups are twisted’. A participant comprehended that ‘the culture and ethos that Shakespeare’s era cherished, shaped the play’, echoing Spivak’s (1985: 243) words that

it should not be possible to read ... British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England’s social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English.

Participants’ comments revealed that they were able to distinguish choices and multiple perspectives (Ciardiello 2004), recognise bias and prejudice (Allen 1997), highlight social justice issues (Ciardiello 2004), appreciate how narratives, portrayals and representations advantaged dominant groups (Habermas 1972; Ladson-Billings 2009), and identify the significance of cultural and social forces in the play (Monkman, MacGillivaray and Levya 2003). A participant also pointed to the activity of ‘making us question interpretations’ indicating that the participant was aware that she was actively resisting and challenging the reading of the play (Bean and Moni 2003).

Finally, a participant pointed out, in the interview, that she would use issues that emerged from the literary texts to help learners develop academically and socially, but noted that she would ‘use teaching moments from the texts, but, I won’t preach. They must make decisions, think hard, and apply it to their own lives and contexts. It must be theirs’. She continued later in the interview, ‘If I tell them ... preach to them, I am, in a way, oppressing them’. In many ways, the participant’s comments indicated that she understood the complexities of a critical pedagogy approach. While she knew that she was obliged to empower her learners and affirm their lives (Giroux 2009), she was equally aware that she had to reflect on her practices so that she did not impose her power and advantage on her learners (Habermas 1972). Overall, she recognised that her teaching of literature and the practices that she used had to be supported by well thought-out philosophical and ideological underpinnings (Ladson-Billings 2009) if she was to help her learners develop academically and socially.

In their drawings and explanations of their images, too, participants acknowledged that the ideal teacher of literature used literary texts to help learners develop academically and socially. Such a teacher ‘gave learners the opportunity to construct their own meanings of texts’; and ‘ensured that she did not intimidate or discourage learners from trying even if they got things wrong as part of their learning process’. Participants’ comments indicated that they understood that they needed to encourage learners to take ownership of their knowledge (Giroux 2009), thus leading to learners’ empowerment. The ideal teacher ‘was willing to develop learners’; ‘dealt with situations that affected learners through the literature’; ‘got learners to relate to the issues raised in texts’; ‘encouraged learners to ask questions’; ‘asked thought-provoking questions’; and ‘challenged learners’ by ‘asking for explanations’.

Participants’ comments revealed that they understood ideal teachers of literature to be those who conscientised learners by using dialogue and active participation in the meaning-making process (Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). Finally, a participant explained that ‘an ideal teacher is a potter who moulds, shapes and carves learners into well-developed citizens in terms of skills, knowledge and abilities, not only academically but personally as well’ (See Appendix Q for examples of participants’ drawings). Thus, the participant recognised the power, and responsibility, of a teacher to have an impact on learners’ lives.

#### **6.4.2.3. Theme 3: Teachers becoming agents of academic and social change**

To consolidate their engagement with the idea of student teachers of literature becoming agents of change, participants were presented with a written task:

*To be a change agent in your literature classroom, you have to bring about change, you have to make a difference to your learners' lives, you have to make them think critically and you have to help them grow. What aspects of The Tempest will you focus on so that you can be a change agent in your classroom? Has this play made you think critically? Explain. You may discuss this with a partner (or not). You will write out your answer on your own and hand it in.*

The aspect most commonly identified by participants was that of colonisation and related issues of enslavement, exploitation and abuse of power. Many participants indicated that they would get learners to 'debate the pros and cons of colonisation'. Other repeated aspects were the need to 'break down stereotypes' and the 'impact of history in shaping a country'. Many participants indicated that they would 'compare the play to South Africa' by noting that they would 'relate it to power struggles in South Africa' and 'look at the lust for power in this country'. One participant indicated that s/he would focus on the aspect of magic by 'relating it to witch doctors and *sangomas*' (traditional practitioners of herbal medicine, divination, healing and counselling); another explained that s/he would 'discuss how magic works in a fantasy, not in reality'; and a further participant noted that 'learners should view magic as a metaphor for the weapon of colonisation'. A participant related the play to Zimbabwe by noting that 'learners must understand that they have power in a country. If a leader is ineffectual, they can get rid of him. That's what needs to be done to Mugabe'. The comments from participants highlight their understanding of the critical nature of critical pedagogy. They could interrogate the play from their own political and socio-historical contexts, and embed the play in their personal experiences and histories. Thus, participants appreciated that education is understood within its social, historical and political context (Biesta and Tedder 2007; Giroux 2009) and criticism is shaped by ideological and philosophical assumptions (Thiong'o 1986). In participants' classrooms, too, they needed to recognise and acknowledge learners' experiences and histories, locate their lessons within the social, historical and political context and comprehend the assumptions that framed their understandings.

Forgiveness, tolerance and violence, too, figured prominently as aspects participants would focus on so that they could effect changes in their classrooms. A participant noted,

It is important to explore forgiveness which can lead to tolerance. If learners understand tolerance, we can reduce violence in our schools and maybe even in the country. It sounds idealistic but as a change agent in the class, it would be worth a try.

The participant's comments indicated that s/he was confident and positive about the possibilities for change and felt prepared and empowered to implement change knowing full well that the attempt might be viewed as overly optimistic or even naive. The participant's comments seem to echo Kritsonis' (2005) finding that an individual's attitude needs to be positive for change to occur. Thus, individual motivation shapes and influences the degree to which change will occur. The comments also reflected that the participant recognised his/-her agency and empowerment in the way s/he chose to act in the classroom. McLaren (2009) reminds us that empowerment equips participants with the skills and courage to implement changes where necessary. Thus, the participant's comments showed that s/he would use issues in the text to significantly alter the way learners behave. Most importantly, the participant had no doubts about serving as an agent of change. For the participant, the process of becoming an agent of change was complete. Thus, even if the participant was idealistic, optimistic or naive, s/he had the beginnings of an identity that was committed to transformation.

Other aspects that participants wanted to focus on included a range of social issues. For example, a participant highlighted the fact that 'Prospero was a single father who was raising his daughter on his own'. In many ways, participants picked up on issues that emerged from the play but also reflected issues that shaped and moulded their own lives. For instance, many participants had indicated in a previous cycle that they were from single-parent families and some participants were themselves single parents. Participants also believed that the play made them think critically with many discussing the concept 'revenge'. Participants noted that 'we want to fight back when someone wrongs us or when we think about how the old government messed up our lives but Madiba (a reference to Nelson Mandela) showed us a different way' and 'often we live our whole lives thinking about how we were wronged. We need to make people accountable but can't get stuck there. We need to take responsibilities for our own actions in life as well'. It is clear that some participants considered revenge as a personal construct and a possible weapon against state oppression. However, their comments indicated that they believed that revenge was, in fact, counter-productive and that there were other channels of redress. More importantly, they understood their agency in how they lived their lives.

Others focussed on 'being a slave of one's own thoughts'; 'imposing our values onto others'; 'listening to our own Ariel, the voice of reason'; 'recognising that the world belongs to all'; and 'considering how the world would look if we acknowledged each other humanely'. Participants' comments indicated that they had analysed the play by placing it within their

own frames of reference and possibly within their own insecurities. Of interest was their emphasis on social justice issues and the need to recognise and acknowledge each other as human beings with rights and responsibilities. Finally, a participant noted that ‘Miranda made me consider the journey of feminism’ and another asked, ‘What is Shakespeare saying about women? Feminine bits of fluff who nod and smile and agree with daddy?’ The comments of the two participants highlighting the portrayal of Miranda indicated awareness of the lack of stature of women in the play and consciousness that men were represented as superior to women, both physically and mentally.

At the end of the cycle, participants completed their final, more extended student evaluations. The table that follows indicates their views.

	A: Strongly agree	B: Agree	C: Neutral/ not sure/ don't know
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	29	2	1
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	26	5	1
	YES	NO	BLANK
16. In your opinion, do teachers need to be agents of change in their classrooms?	32		
17. Will YOU be an agent of change in your classroom?	26	1	5
18. Will YOU be an effective teacher of literature?	30		2

**Theme 3: Teachers becoming agents of academic and social change: Table FF**

The table indicate that all participants believe that teachers need to be agents of change in their classrooms (Question 16), revealing that all participants understood what was ideal and thus what they hoped to aspire towards. While a vast majority (81%) strongly agreed that the lectures made them think about themselves as potential change agents in the classroom, five participants agreed and one participant was undecided (Question 14). No one disagreed. While a vast majority (81%) asserted that they would be agents of change in their classrooms, five participants left the answer blank and one indicated a negative response (Question 17). It is possible that the five participants were not sure whether they had the ability, will or strength to serve as agents of change in their classrooms. It is significant that the one

participant, who noted that s/he would not be an agent of change, still believed that teachers needed to be agents of change in their classrooms, again signifying an aspiration to an ideal. Although a majority of participants (91%) strongly agreed that the lectures made them think about themselves as teachers in the classroom, two participants agreed (not strongly agreed) and one participant was undecided (Question 13). No one disagreed. While a substantial majority (94%) declared that they would be effective teachers of literature, two participants left the answer blank (Question 18), indicating, again, a possible uncertainty in their abilities to fulfil the role of an effective teacher of literature. Significantly, no participants indicated a negative response to being an effective teacher of literature, implying that participants had not given up on themselves and believed that they could be effective teachers of literature.

The interviews with six participants revealed conflicting responses when asked if they were excited at the prospect of going out to teach in their own classrooms. While participants revealed their enthusiasm to go out and teach, they also disclosed their fears and doubts about taking over a classroom. A participant stated, 'I'm excited to start teaching and know what I'd like in my classrooms, but it's intimidating. What if I don't know? What if I'm just bad?' Another noted, 'I want to be a change agent. I want to make a difference. But, it's hard, you know. It's just not knowing what to expect'. Comments revealed that participants understood that they were at the end of their four-year degree designed to equip them to teach learners in a classroom and were thus eager to start teaching. However, as all six interview participants had not, at that point, been placed in schools, they were aware that they were to enter environments about which they knew very little. Thus, they could not tell if they would have opportunities to teach as they would like or have the potential to grow professionally. The thought of leaving university and entering their profession was therefore perceived as daunting and filled with anxiety.

On being asked how they believed future student teachers could become agents of academic and social change, responses indicated that student teachers 'must be clued up on content first, then they can make any difference'; 'must be inspired to make a difference'; 'must want to change ... must see children as human beings who must be loved ... and respected'; and 'must know why they want to be teachers. If it's money, forget it. If they want to make a change in their kids' lives, then they have to think for themselves and say, how can I be significant to ... for my learners?'

Participants' comments revealed that they recognised the importance of being equipped to teach and thus needed a strong command of their subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and a commitment to change. Freire (2009) points out that effective teachers need a firm command of their subject matter and a thorough understanding of the curriculum. Freire notes that teachers need to teach their subject matter while, at the same time, serving as agents of change by setting up opportunities for learners to engage with the subject critically. Freire's views are echoed by Fanon who states that 'what matters is not to know the world but to change it' (2008, 13). Responses by the participants also indicated that they were aware of the importance of being motivated and confident about their abilities to make a worthwhile difference to their learners' lives, and they had learned and understood that teachers needed to teach with a humanising engaged pedagogy in an environment where learners are treated with love, respect and dignity (hooks 1994; Ladson-Billings 1995; Bartolome 2009). In addition, participants recognised that, for teachers to be effective change agents, they had to have a deep commitment to making a difference and a clear vision of why they were teachers (Francis and le Roux 2011).

In response to questions on the interventions used in the classroom, participants revealed that they experienced a measure of uncertainty in the initial cycle. However, they found most interventions useful, appreciated the fact that they had input at every step of the participatory action research process, and indicated that they would use the interventions in their own classrooms. Responses such as 'I know what works for me, so I'll use those things. I can do some things but not others'; 'I feel equipped to teach. I've learnt a lot'; and 'working out what I want and ... we spoke about our personal philosophies about teaching, that has helped me ... made me feel more secure. I know this is where I start and then build from there'. Responses indicated that while participants believed that they were capable of teaching and making a change to their learners' lives, they understood that they entered their classrooms with strengths and limitations and appreciated that they had to use strategies that played to their strengths. In addition, they were aware that their individual beliefs, values and definitions about teaching and being teachers had to be acknowledged.

Participants were asked if they identified themselves as potential agents of change in their classrooms and if so, how did they define their roles. All interview participants revealed that they wanted to serve as agents of change. Participants defined their roles by explaining what they would do in their classrooms. They noted that they would 'remember to encourage talk and questions so learners learn how to examine issues'; 'take learners' backgrounds into

account when developing lessons'; 'break the cycle of victimhood that our learners sometimes have'; 'encourage and motivate learners to be their best'; 'teach with love and caring'; and 'remind learners that they have a voice and must use it. They must also respect other learners' thoughts'. Participants' comments revealed their understanding of the need for active critical engagement, dialogue and conscientisation in their classrooms (Ciardiello 2004; Darder, Baltodano and Torres 2009). They also appreciated the need to take cognisance of learners' backgrounds, ground knowledge in learners' experiences (Bartolome 2009; Giroux 2009), and be compassionate teachers who taught with charity, wisdom, love and grace (Meister 2010). Furthermore, they affirmed the importance of creating space for learners' voices so that all learners were able to participate in an atmosphere of respect (Boler 2004) and recognised that learners needed to be equipped to critique the norms that reproduced their negative expectations and perceptions about themselves (Ladson-Billings 2009).

When asked if the cycles had any effect on them, all interview participants indicated that they did. A participant noted, 'I've grown. I think differently. I was preoccupied with my own stuff. I've got a bigger picture now. You'll be proud of me if you see me in a classroom. I'll be proud of me (laughter)'. A second participant indicated, 'I have ... like a yardstick to use ... to measure. I can't go back. I really want to be a teacher who has some significance'. Another participant shared, 'It has made me look at my own child. I think, you've got to be empowered to think, to not take things at face value. I'm different with my child now'.

Participants' responses signified that they were committed to bring about change, able to reflect on their thoughts and actions (Priestley et al. 2012) and could transfer the implications of the study beyond the classroom into their homes. Significantly, participants were able to 'live a critically conscious presence in the pedagogical process' and were not 'a shadow of the educator's presence' (Freire 1970, 202), as was evidenced in cycle two when a participant in the focus group indicated to the researcher, 'I want to be like you'. While role models are important, it is equally important for participants to recognise their own agency and voice in the process of becoming agents of change in their classrooms.

However, an interview participant provided a view different from others when she shared, 'I will challenge prejudice in my class and make it known that discrimination of any kind is not acceptable. But ... please don't judge me, I found myself telling my son ... he's only fifteen ... that I would kick him out of the house if he ever says he's a homo. It was a joke but I thought ... I am prejudiced. But it's how I feel. I know it's wrong but it's how I feel'. The participant's comments indicated that she knew what to do and say to demonstrate her commitment

towards justice, equality, democracy and freedom (Giroux 2009; Biesta and Tedder 2007). However, she was unable, at that point, to grow beyond the deep-seated beliefs that had been taught to her by her family and community. While the participant affirmed her awareness of the conflict in her mind and acknowledged that she would not impose her views on her learners, she, nevertheless, indicated that 'it's in me. I can't help it. It's part of my culture. If I can change, I will. I will think about what we discussed, but it's not easy'. While the researcher and participant spent much time understanding both the participant's and researcher's views, the results of the dialogue are unknown.

At the end of another interview, a participant revealed that she was not going to teach after graduating. She noted that she would begin a Bachelor of Commerce degree, with the aim of becoming a chartered accountant. This participant had embraced the study with enthusiasm, and had asked to be put in touch with projects that involved service to the community. She had volunteered to do her Teaching Practice in a rural area with very few resources, and she had offered her services to many outreach programmes both on and off campus. She explained, 'I'm doing it for my child. You say... a better life... make life better. I have to do it for her. I grew up with nothing. My mother ... she wasn't ... she didn't go to school. I can make a big difference to my child's life. I thought you would understand ... as a mother'. The participant left the interview asking, 'Who says a chartered accountant can't be an agent of change?'

While the researcher was initially disappointed that a participant who seemed set to make a difference to her learners' lives was going to abandon the teaching profession, it became clear that the participant was able to recognise her potential to make a difference to the lives immediately around her and was prepared to act on this potential. She felt strongly enough about her choice that she was prepared to sacrifice more time and energy on her studies so that she could 'make a big difference' to her child's life. She also understood that she could possibly earn much more as a chartered accountant than as a teacher, pointing to the participant's perception that greater material wealth equated to greater happiness. The participant's perception was in many ways understandable having grown up lacking material wealth and she was convinced that she was going to make life materially stronger for her family.

The drawings, too, aimed to understand how participants defined their identities as teachers of literature and as agents of change (See Appendix M). The instruction to participants contained

no mention of change agency. The idea was to determine if participants' ideas of the ideal teacher of literature included ideas of change agency.

Only five participants (14%) used the words 'agent of change' in their drawings or mind maps and in their explanations. However, the majority of participants defined many characteristics of a change agent in their presentations. Thus, while they did not articulate the words, 'agent of change', they understood the characteristics that defined an ideal teacher of literature who was also an agent of change.

In their drawings and explanations, participants noted that the ideal teacher of literature 'had a passion for making a difference in learners' lives'; was 'committed to change'; and 'instigated change and influenced learners positively'. The comments revealed that participants understood the definitions of a change agent and believed that an ideal teacher of literature could be a change agent as well. Such a teacher was a 'positive role model'; 'encouraged confidence in learners'; and convinced them 'to think out of the box'. Participants' comments indicated that an ideal teacher of literature had to be worthy of emulating, able to inspire, and empowered to encourage scholarly reflection and practice so that learners become critical, active human beings (Giroux and McLaren 1996).

A participant noted that to serve as an agent of change, the teacher had to 'know herself well because who we are influences how a child learns a subject'. The participant understood that teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs 'influence the impact they will have on student learning and development' (Taylor and Wasicsko 2000, 193). According to participants, an effective teacher of literature 'did not tell learners what was right or wrong. Learners discovered things themselves with the aid of the teacher as a guide'. Participants' comments revealed that they recognised the need for a teacher not to impose his/-her values and beliefs on learners and yet were also aware that a teacher should provide information so that learners can make informed choices.

Such teachers also got to know their learners' 'attitudes and backgrounds'; 'embraced all learners'; and were 'not judgemental'. Participants thus recognised that teachers need to know and use learners' realities, histories and perspectives in their teaching and learning practices (Bartolome 1994). Finally, a participant explained that the ideal teacher of literature 'facilitates a culture of learning and development where learners learn how to be innovative and critical thinkers', and another participant noted that 'an ideal teacher is someone who pushes learners to excel and challenges their thinking. Yet, they are happy to be in the class'.

The participants point to a teacher who enables and demands academic excellence while, at the same time, ensuring that learners are excited and engaged in the classroom (See Appendix Q for examples of participants' drawings).

### **6.4.3. Reflections on cycle six**

As with previous cycles, all participants commented on and verified the researcher's analysis of cycle six. As these were the final reflections of the study, participants also reflected on the study as a whole. It was found that participants believed that the modelling of strategies by the researcher was made significantly more effective by making the rationales for and use of the strategies explicit. In addition, the researcher shared that she needed to be well-prepared and had to reflect critically on her practices so that modelling served its purposes.

Participants, too, noted that they understood the importance of preparation and critical reflection to enable learners and teachers to excel and develop. In addition, they recognised the need for deep disciplinary knowledge and life-long learning.

Participants pointed out that they understood that literature lessons needed to be 'learner-centred'; 'interactive'; 'participatory'; 'collaborative'; and 'creative'. They indicated that they needed to promote reading, create positive classroom environments, listen attentively to their learners, and teach with 'love'; 'understanding'; and 'poise'. They also noted that a sense of humour was essential for a teacher. Overall, they believed that the study helped to prepare them to become effective, engaged teachers of literature. However, they were confident that the skills, experiences and knowledge that they gained from the study would easily apply to the teaching of other subjects as well.

Participants indicated that they would teach literary texts using various pedagogical tools to explore the range of issues found in the texts. They pointed to teaching learners how to consider choices in the text, explore the text from various perspectives, and highlight social justice issues including discrimination, bias and prejudice. They also wanted learners to be able to investigate the representation of groups, identify the cultural and social forces in a text, and resist and challenge readings of a text. Of significance to participants was the need to interrogate texts from within learners' contexts and histories. Thus, participants had a clear idea of how to apply critical pedagogy principles to their lessons.

However, participants identified the complexities of using a critical pedagogy approach. They knew that they had to highlight and make learners aware of important issues in the texts. Yet, they questioned the power relations inherent in the process. They considered the possibility

that the teacher could impose his/-her views on the learners because of the unequal power relations between the teacher and learners, thus negating critical pedagogy principles. The hierarchical advantage of the teacher and the possibility of hegemonic practices could result in the teacher 'indoctrinating' learners. Participants were aware of the indoctrinating practices of apartheid South Africa and wanted to ensure that similar practices did not characterise their classrooms. After much discussion and deliberation, participants decided on two guiding principles. Firstly, they recognised the Constitution of South Africa as an important guideline to what are acceptable practices. Secondly, they needed to reflect seriously and critically to determine the ideological and philosophical underpinnings that they wanted to characterise their functions and roles as teachers.

Participants believed that reflecting on each cycle throughout the participatory action research provided important opportunities for them to explore their own thinking and their future actions. Of greater significance, they recognised that they need to constantly reflect on who they were and how they understood teaching and learning, and they acknowledged that they needed to be open to change. Only then would their learners be receptive to change. Further, many participants indicated that the study forced them to work out some of the core principles that would underpin their roles and functions as teachers and their teaching practices. However, they acknowledged that their roles, functions and identities as teachers were probably going to evolve with time and experiences, and understood that they needed to be aware of and embrace their constant transformation. Thus, while the study aimed at student teachers of literature becoming agents of change, the process of becoming a teacher as well as an agent of change is dynamic.

In their reflections on cycle six, most participants believed that they would be effective, engaged teachers of literature and they would be agents of change in their classrooms. They understood the importance of a teacher having agency and voice, and for the teacher to enable learners to have agency and voice as well. They noted that the class discussions, group and pair-work, and written work on change agency worked because concepts were constructed using a literary text. Thus, they could use the texts as useful examples and catalysts of how to implement change agency. A participant noted that 'it might have been tedious if we just spoke about it and didn't relate it to something. Now I have an idea how to apply it in my classroom'. However, they made it clear that a literary text is not the only means by which to engage critically with a concept or issue. Critical engagement is possible using various subjects, topics, experiences, or situations, among others.

In terms of change agency, participants noted that issues of change, transformation and empowerment needed to be incorporated into many more of their university modules because, as a participant noted, ‘This surely does not apply to literature only’. In addition, they were clear that teacher education can and should serve as a mechanism for addressing social change and social justice issues. As a participant noted, ‘Clearly, our ultimate aim is to enable a better life for our learners’.

Many participants also indicated a measure of insecurity as well as eagerness to embark on their professional careers. On reflecting on the interview finding that a participant had chosen not to teach but was to begin a Bachelor of Commerce degree, three other participants shared their plans for the future. One participant had applied and been accepted to study law. She noted that her mother had persuaded her to change her professional direction because ‘she says that teaching’s got a bad reputation. You know the strikes and disruptions’. The participant noted that she realised that she could make a difference in a classroom, but that she could equally do the same in the legal field. A second participant indicated that he had been accepted into the army, ‘not to be a soldier. I’m going into IT’. The participant indicated that he had responded to an advertisement and that because he had a degree, he was being employed at a senior level. A third participant noted that she had applied for a job in the prison services teaching adult inmates English as a second language. She was told, at the interview, that the job changed as inmates entered or left the system, and, while some inmates were literate, many were not. Thus, basic literacy had to be taught. At the time of the reflection on cycle six, she was awaiting a reply, but subsequent correspondence with the participant revealed that she has been successful in her application. While the four participants had chosen not to enter school classrooms, they were entering professions and fields of learning where they had the potential to make a difference. The concepts of teaching, learning and education thus had to be considered in much broader contexts than the traditional ones.

For the researcher, an important finding emerged when discussing the overall study. While participants were evaluating the study, considering what they would take away with them, and determining how they would engage with the teaching and learning process, they were able to use, with confidence, the important concepts of the study. In their discussions, they considered the importance of taking cognisance of Lortie’s (1975) ‘apprenticeship of observation’, Freire’s (1970) concepts of ‘banking’ and ‘libertarian’ education and other concepts such as ‘agency’, ‘voice’, ‘hegemony’, ‘critical literacy’, ‘conscientisation’,

‘collaborative strategies’ and ‘humanising pedagogy’. While such concepts, and others, were engaged with through each cycle, participants could use them independently and with a clear understanding of how the concepts worked in authentic, practical situations. However, while participants were conversant with terminology and had clear ideas of their identities, roles and functions as teachers, it remained to be seen if the ideas were transferred to real situations.

### 6.5. Third Year of Study: Novice teacher interviews

Four months into their first year of teaching, at the end of the first school term and during their first school break, four novice teachers, who were part of the study, were interviewed to determine whether the principles and ideas of the study were being transferred to participants’ classrooms (See Appendix D). A purposeful sample of novice teachers was chosen based on the race and gender of the teachers and on the material resources at their schools.

The characteristics of the participants chosen are described in the table that follows, data from their interviews, in the form of vignettes, are presented, and an analysis of all the vignettes is provided thereafter. Pseudonyms are used for the novice teachers.

	Name	Race	Gender	Co-educational/ Single sex school	Resources in school	Grades taught
1	Anisha	Indian	Female	Single sex	Well resourced– previously a Whites only high school	8 and 9
2	Wesley	White	Male	Co-educational	Moderately resourced – previously a Whites only high school	10 and 11
3	Laverne	Coloured	Female	Co-educational	Moderately resourced – previously an Indians only high school	9 and 10
4	Zinzi	African	Female	Co-educational	Poorly resourced – previously an Africans only primary school	6 and 7

**Novice teachers: Table GG**

#### 6.5.1. Vignette: Anisha

Anisha, an Indian female, applied for an advertised job, was interviewed and was employed by a single-sex, well-resourced school that was previously for Whites only. She was assigned to teach grades eight and nine girls. She indicated that the job interview was ‘terrifying’ as a panel of very articulate, confident women interviewed her on issues personal and academic. Of interest was a question by the principal who asked, ‘Can you tell me the names of the last three books you read?’ Being an avid reader, Anisha felt confident answering the question. She subsequently found that the English teachers often discussed and shared books, both among themselves and with their learners.

Anisha shared that, as a learner, she had attended a school that was previously for Indians only, noting ‘in our classes we had Indians, Africans and Coloureds and our teachers were Indian’. She had to adapt to a multiracial, multicultural learner and teacher population. Anisha noted that the school was academically very successful and emphasised academic excellence. Fees were relatively high and fundraising brought in much money to the school’s coffers. Facilities were of a high quality and, Anisha noted, ‘their library is much better than ours at university’. Learners had access to computers, books (both fiction and non-fiction), journals, magazines, CDs, DVDs, computer programmes and games, and the internet, and they made good use of these facilities. Many teachers at the school had been there for over ten years. While it was a state school and the state provided a set number of teachers, the school was able to employ additional teachers to keep class sizes manageable. Anisha was employed by the school, not the state. Nevertheless, she received the same salary and benefits that a state-paid teacher would receive. Anisha indicated that she was ‘very grateful’ to be part of the school.

Anisha’s average class size was twenty five learners, and she noted that prescribed academic requirements were made known to her from the beginning. She was mentored by the English head of department, felt free to ask any English teacher for assistance, which they readily provided, attended weekly English meetings, and had, in four months, been visited by both the principal and head of department in her classrooms to monitor her progress. The head of department had asked to see Anisha’s lesson plans and worksheets and had offered the use of worksheets that had already been developed. While academic excellence was emphasised, Anisha was at liberty to use strategies that she considered most useful in her classrooms.

Her other major at university being drama, Anisha indicated that she used drama strategies for many lessons. She noted the use of ‘role-plays’, ‘teacher-in-role’ and ‘hotseating’, as well as

doing ‘lots and lots of talking. They talk in pairs, groups and as a class’. She also noted that she was constantly questioning them and ‘challenging their views. They love it’. She reflected that the girls were from predominantly economically privileged communities and thus she used the literary texts to ‘expose them to other people’s lives, show them how others live ... different cultures and classes’. She noted that she wanted them to see that ‘people have many differences, many things in life are not fair, but some things ... our core needs and core wants are often the same’.

Anisha also sat in on other English teachers’ lessons and noted that they were ‘mostly excellent’. She witnessed teachers using various forms of media, such as films, computers and music in their lessons, learners considered alternate endings to the texts, they wrote letters in character, and they made speeches and devised plays working from the text under study as a catalyst. Learners were also taken on many excursions to places of interest, to the theatre and to films to enhance their English lessons.

Anisha noted that the principal also taught sections of literature to learners and ‘she is brilliant. Vibrant, funny and the girls just ... listen ... eat out of her hand. But she provokes them and challenges their ideas. I’ve learnt so much from her. She just has a presence’.

Anisha indicated that the principal spoke to learners on a regular basis at assemblies and always emphasised the need for them to be ‘strong, independent, empowered women.’ Anisha found that the learners responded well to the talks. She stated, ‘You see them ... at the assemblies ... they nod and, you know. She reads things to them and talks to them about current affairs and then shows them ... how it affects their lives. She shows them that a good education will take them places’.

On thinking back to the study, Anisha noted,

I should have been intimidated by this school, their results and ethos. I should have felt intimidated by working with teachers and learners from all race groups. My teachers, my school friends were all Indian.

However, she felt ‘confident and strong’ coming into the school. She believed that the modules covered during the study had shown her ‘many ways of making my mark, so I didn’t feel I wouldn’t cope’. She did note that at no time in her four-year degree was she made aware of how difficult it was to be a teacher. She noted, ‘It’s so hard. I’m just preparing constantly and the marking never ends. English teachers have it worst. On top of that, we are expected to see to extra-curricular activities after school. I leave school late, go home, start preparing for

the next day and mark until I go to bed'. However, she tried to 'keep a perspective on things ... like reflect often ... know why I'm doing this ... what I want to do for the girls'. She noted that 'together with my drama prac exams, our study is something that I refer to all the time. I'm very happy here and am still finding my feet but our study was just so relevant. I will make this work'.

### 6.5.2. Vignette: Wesley

Wesley, a White male, applied for an advertised job, was interviewed and was employed by a co-educational, moderately-resourced school and he was assigned to teach grades ten and eleven learners. While the school was previously for Whites only, the present learner population was predominantly African and Coloured 'with a few others'. However, the teachers were 'almost all still lily-white'. He revealed that once he started teaching he learnt that the principal still tried to employ White teachers only, especially 'the relatives of teachers'. He added, 'Don't worry, apartheid is alive and kicking' and noted that most staff members were 'old and had taught at the school for a long time' and 'often thought back fondly to the good old days, you know, when it was the *mooi meisietjies* and *seuntjies* (Afrikaans for pretty little girls and little boys) from the area' who attended the school.

Wesley had attended a formerly Whites-only school as a learner but felt 'very comfortable' teaching his learners. His English classes comprised forty learners, many of whom could not pay school fees and who faced many socio-economic challenges in their lives. He explained, 'They're just normal kids. Full of typical teenage nonsense. I just accept them as they are and try to make my classroom, you know, just there, just cool. But I let them know that I'm on their side. I want them to succeed'.

The strategies that Wesley found most effective were class discussions 'so that they can practice talking English' and reading aloud to the class 'so that they hear the language ... poetry, prose, drama'. He also shared that he had made many short DVDs which he played off his laptop to them 'featuring everything ... poetry, pics on their short stories, song lyrics read aloud, rap' and he noted that that he had promised his class that, if they completed their homework set for the vacation, he would show them how to make DVDs in the new term. He also showed films to his class 'just to interest them first' but added that he used the film 'as a teaching resource as well'. He noted, 'I use lots of ideas from our lectures ... just water them down ... works really well'.

However, Wesley's greatest concern was the attitude of the English head of department and the general mindset of the staff. He believed that his head of department was 'authoritarian', 'cantankerous', 'very conservative and set in her ways', she reminded him often that he was on probation, and she deemed his 'use of films and DVDs a waste of time. She asks, how are those things going to help them?' She also preferred Wesley using 'established texts' and 'her worksheets' which Wesley considered to lack relevance and currency, and which 'tended to all be set in rural England ... meadows and fields of heather'. She had insisted, despite his protestations, that the grade elevens read '*Mill on the Floss* when I wanted them to read *Master Harold and the Boys*'. She indicated that he needed to stay away from texts that would 'incite racial thinking'. However, she did concede that she would re-visit the suggestion the following year. Wesley added, 'it seems like I have to wait for her to retire or die before I can teach anything meaningful and at least from this century'. He did note that, after much negotiations with the principal and head of department, he had taken his grade eleven class to see a play, an experience the learners 'totally loved' but which he was told 'would bring disgrace to the school because learners would run a riot'. He noted that it took a week of fundraising 'and I put in the rest' to pay for the theatre visit.

Wesley also noted that the teaching and administrative members of staff were 'always complaining about the learners', 'spoke to them in a derogatory way', had 'given up on them like they were lost causes' and 'seemed to be perpetually angry'. At staff meetings such sentiments emerged and at school assemblies, the teacher or principal taking the assembly seemed to 'do nothing but shout at the learners. What a way to start the day. Even I feel down'. He also noted that the teachers were 'a bunch of racists' and were 'homophobic'. His greatest concern was that 'when they utter racist comments ... or their stupid homo jokes, they expect me to understand ... to join in. I'm terrified that... one day ... one day I will smile with them and be, you know, one of them. They think ... because I'm White, I must think like them. You know, if I just agree with them ... with those old farts, my life will be a lot easier here.' He added, 'Don't worry, I haven't gone over to the dark side (laughter)', revealing that he was able to question the dominant culture of the school.

Of the study, he noted that 'they (the English Education modules) were the only modules of any relevance and significance in my entire university life. The rest, Ed. studies, Prof. Studies, and all those other modules ... just airy fairy. No real meaning ... no substance ... doesn't help me now as a teacher'. Like Anisha, Wesley highlighted that teaching and being a teacher were much more difficult than he was led to believe. Like Anisha, he noted the large volumes of

marking and the preparation each day. He also added that ‘the records, the admin ... it’s just too much. And try leaving it for a day and it’s piled up. That’s really tough’. He noted that ‘if there was one thing I would ask you to do in the study ... you know, if you do it again ... show the prep, the admin stuff .. show us how to handle it’.

However, Wesley believed that he was making a difference to his learners and noted that ‘they know I care. I tell them that they are important. And they respond differently when they know’. He continued, ‘their lives are messed up ... pregnancies, parents with AIDS, some kids have no food ... I do what I can’. He then explained that he tried to show them that ‘life can get better’ and he took extra lunch on a daily basis to school and left it in his classroom: ‘They know the food’s there. I say, if anyone needs some lunch, help yourself. How can I eat and know they are hungry?’

### **6.5.3. Vignette: Laverne**

Laverne, a Coloured female, had left her curriculum vitae with the school the year before and, after an interview, was employed in a state post at a co-educational, moderately-resourced school that was previously for Indians only. As a learner, Laverne had been to schools for Coloureds only, with Coloured teachers and Coloured learners. Of the interview, a particular question stood out for Laverne. She was asked, ‘Do you have the strength to be a teacher?’ She explained, ‘I thought they meant physical strength and I said that I could do it, but now I know they mean much more ... emotional strength, mental strength. I didn’t know it then’.

The school had some facilities, such as ‘a smallish library, labs, a few computers, and a football field that serves as a netball and volley ball court when needed’. However, Laverne noted that ‘we have a really committed staff and the principal is a true leader’. She pointed out that from the second day of school, grade twelve learners had to be at school an hour before the other learners arrived and they left school two hours after other learners left. Teachers worked with them, completing the syllabus, revising material, extending learners, and working with past year exam papers. Laverne noted, ‘I heard that this practice has been continuing for years. Learners know this. There’s a waiting list for this school’. She also noted that other learners could also stay after school if they wished to complete their homework or if they needed extra assistance from teachers.

The principal was ‘very firm, but very caring and learners really respect him’. He stressed ‘academic excellence but he also reminded teachers to be aware of learners’ backgrounds’. He was also ‘very supportive of teachers and the efforts they made to help learners’. Laverne

explained that many learners faced very difficult lives with experiences of violence, death, grief and poverty being ‘fairly common’. The principal had enlisted sponsors to provide some facilities for the school, he, a group of teachers and sponsors provided meals for learners on a daily basis, and he held regular meetings with the parent body. If there was a problem with a learner, whether ‘academic or behaviour’, parents or guardians would be called in to discuss the problem and work out a way forward.

The staff also proved very helpful to Laverne when she arrived at the school and ‘random teachers would pop in to ask me if I was okay. Do you know how to work the register? Have you found your way around?’ Laverne explained, ‘You know they are there, but they allow you to grow’. Laverne spent her lunch breaks with a group of teachers of English and they ‘are so helpful. They answer my questions, they check if I’m managing a text, and they offer to lend me anything I need. I’m blessed’.

Laverne was assigned to teach grades nine and ten learners and her average class size was forty learners. The learners were from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds but were mostly from working-class backgrounds. In her English classes, Laverne noted that she used pair-work, group-work and ‘lots and lots of speaking activities’. She noted that she researched all her learners ‘from their files, so I know where ... what they ....experience. It has helped me understand them’. She indicated that she used issues in the texts to engage learners in discussions about ‘topics like teenage pregnancies, poverty, violence, crime’. She noted, ‘They have so much to say. They want to talk. But I don’t know how to handle some things’. She then went on to explain that a learner came back to school after many weeks after the learner’s mother died of AIDS. Laverne said, ‘How do you handle it? I was so scared to say the wrong...say something insensitive. And she was a wreck. The whole class had ... had to be like helped. I’m not trained, you know’. She also noted incidents of a learner’s brother being stabbed to death, of girls falling pregnant and of learners confiding in her that their parents had lost jobs. She had sought help from another teacher who asked her to speak to the principal. Laverne noted, ‘He knows exactly what to do ... who to phone’, and that the principal often visited homes to establish and solve problems. Laverne noted that while ‘our study was just so vital to my training, I would have liked to learn how to handle ... life, you know, these ... lives that I’m ... that I should help’.

#### **6.5.4. Vignette: Zinzi**

Zinzi, an African female, had received a bursary to study at university and, in return, had to teach at a school determined by the Department of Education. She was appointed to a co-educational, poorly-resourced primary school that was previously for Africans only. The school teacher and learner population was still African. As a learner, Zinzi had been to a primary school that was previously for Africans only ‘in my township’ (‘all my teachers and the learners were African’) and a high school that was previously for Indians only where ‘I travelled out of my township to go to school’ (‘all my teachers were Indian but the learners were Indian, African and Coloured’). When Zinzi was first appointed to the school, ‘I was so happy because I lived in the same township, but I knew nothing about the school. I was trained to teach senior-FET (Grades seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve), but was sent to teach grades six and seven. I was happy’. On starting her teaching at the school, she was informed by a teacher that the school was identified as a ‘dysfunctional school’.

Her average class size was sixty learners whose ages ranged from ‘twelve to twenty two years in one class’. She explained that ‘some learners leave to have babies and then come back, some have been in jail, some just leave, and some have failed three times. You know, after three times they move to the next grade’. She described her classrooms as ‘just rows and rows of desks and chairs, and if they all come to school they have to share because we are short of furniture’. She could not walk between rows because ‘there was no space. So I don’t know what’s going on. I talk, they talk, they do their work and I can’t check. I can only stand in front. It’s so frustrating’.

On being asked about facilities, she asked, ‘What facilities?’ She explained that she used twenty books for her sixty learners, there were no computer facilities in the school, ‘except for the secretary’ and there was no ‘real playground, just a dusty space where the kids play’. She continued, ‘You know, a typical apartheid school for Blacks’. She had enquired about a library and when a teacher stated that there was a library at one time, she went around the school trying to locate it. On securing the keys from the principal, she found a room with ‘about ten books in a filthy state’. She asked the principal if she could set up a library, and he agreed.

She noted that she used pair-work and class discussions with her learners to ‘get them talking’ and ‘I try so hard to motivate them, to encourage them, and many of them ... most of them ... want to learn’. She shared that she read aloud to them, asked them questions, ‘even questions that made them think’, and ‘got them to talk ... talk about the story ... talk about the topics,

themes, you know, what is this story telling us? I make it apply ... apply to their lives'. She noted that many learners 'did not do any homework in any subject. I asked them about it and some said they don't have lights. Some just said that they don't know what to do. And I know that some are just lazy'.

Other teachers, too, shared with Zinzi that learners did not do homework and 'many had stopped giving homework'. Zinzi noted that other teachers of English used 'only teacher talk. They put up summaries on the board and the children take them down. The teachers also ... mostly use Zulu, even in the English class'. The teachers of English had regular meetings, and at the second meeting, Zinzi shared her concerns about the school and the teaching of English. At the meeting she learnt that the high school across the road from the school, a high school known for its academic achievements, had informed the principal that the high school would not be accepting his learners. Zinzi exclaimed to the researcher, 'Can you believe it? Opposite our school! They don't want to take these kids. So, where must they go? But that's the reputation we've got'. Zinzi added, 'Don't get the wrong idea. There are many really good Black schools and they work very hard. I did my TP (Teaching Practice) at two excellent schools ... Black schools ... with very good results ... and hard-working teachers. But this one ...'.

Zinzi indicated that she wanted to help her learners and added, 'I can't give up on them. They are mine ... they are from my township. I wish I could, like just wave a magic wand and ... all sorted out'. At the end of the interview, the researcher offered to help Zinzi with some ideas and Zinzi indicated that she would be in touch. The offer of help by the researcher set up a series of three initial meetings with Zinzi (one telephonically and two in person) and two other meetings thereafter. The first meeting was initiated by Zinzi who sent a text message to the researcher saying that she needed to see the researcher urgently.

She entered the researcher's office with, 'You didn't tell us it was so hard. The study wasn't truly... exactly truthful ... not a truthful depiction of school. I'm struggling every day'. She then explained that she had set a task for learners to prepare a reading for assessment. When she asked one of her older learners, 'one of my thugs', he kept on refusing, asking her to come back to him. When she insisted he read, he stood up very slowly, 'seemed to waste time doing everything but reading' and just picked up the book. She then stated, 'He then burst out crying and left the room'. Zinzi was mortified, 'I didn't know what to do. Go after him, leave him and he was the biggest thug. The others were terrified of him. Everyone was in shock'. She

then added, 'I was so scared. I didn't know what he would do to me'. She noted that, at the end of the day, he returned and revealed to her that he could not read. He was twenty two, had been in jail, and was a gang leader. He also said that he could not write, not even his name. He shared with Zinzi that he was just 'pushed through' after failing repeatedly. Zinzi asked, 'What do I do? I haven't been prepared for this. I can't do it. I can't leave. My bursary ... I can't pay it back'.

The researcher and Zinzi then worked out, together, how to move forward. Zinzi indicated that she wanted to 'do something for them ... anything. I'm prepared to work hard'. Firstly, it was decided that Zinzi would approach the principal to keep learners separated based on age, and this was subsequently agreed to by the principal. Zinzi decided to set up the library and enlisted the help of learners to clean the library. She took some books and magazines to the library and learners, 'especially the young ones' borrowed them immediately. The researcher got university staff members and friends to donate books and magazines as well. Zinzi and the researcher worked out possible ways to teach learners, being aware of the challenges learners faced. With the permission of the principal, Zinzi set up classes after school to help learners who could not read or write and devised lessons designed around their needs. She indicated that she was not equipped to teach basic literacy to adults but 'was trying'. She noted that 'some of the thugs don't come but I want to give them time'. The principal warned her that leaving school late could be dangerous for her as she waited for a bus to take her home: 'So I asked my thug ... he stands with his gang at the corner, smoking, *zolling* (smoking marijuana) ... I said, I leave late from school. Is it safe? He said, No miss, it's not good. Tell me what time, I will come and get you'. Zinzi then noted that when her after-school lessons were over, 'her thug' would be waiting at the school entrance, would offer to carry her books, and would wait at the bus-stop with her until the bus arrived. She reminded him that he should attend the after-school classes and he said, 'Maybe one day'.

At a meeting with the English teachers, she shared what she was doing both in her classes and in her after-school classes. Zinzi noted that the teachers were impressed and asked her to have regular meetings with them to 'take them through the strategies'. They asked her to design a programme for the English teachers. Zinzi then attended her first cluster meeting of teachers of English in the area. A colleague of Zinzi's shared what Zinzi was doing with the meeting and they elected her chairperson of the cluster and asked her to work with them. Zinzi noted, 'Can you imagine? Me? I'm new ... brand new and I'm chair. It's very stressful, but I'm going to do it'. Zinzi's principal had also asked her to teach grades four and five the following year

so ‘you start with them when they are young’. She indicated to him that she had not been trained to teach the younger grades ‘but he said I’ll cope’. Subsequent telephonic meetings revealed that Zinzi was ‘still struggling every day, but it’s starting to show ... to make a difference’.

## **6.6. Interpretation of vignettes**

Each of the novice teachers interviewed came from different educational backgrounds. The schools that a teacher attends are known to shape how the teacher constructs the teaching and learning situation (Lortie 1975; Gore and Zeichner 1991; McPherson 2000). Laverne went to Coloured schools where all teachers and learners were Coloured; Wesley went to White schools where all teachers and learners were White. Yet, they now taught at schools where there were greater racial and other forms of diversity. While Anisha’s and Zinzi’s teachers were Indian, presently there were learners of other racial groups in their classes. Anisha taught at a multiracial, multicultural, materially advantaged school while Zinzi taught at a materially disadvantaged school where there were only African learners and teachers. All four teachers experienced a measure of uncertainty on how to engage with the diversity and complexity of the dynamics in their classrooms. While the study did consider the effects of a teacher’s schooling on his/-her teaching practices, the researcher believes that it failed to engage in sufficient depth on how to teach diverse, complex classrooms. While it considered how to engage with issues of race, class and gender in literary texts, it failed to consider with adequate attention how to engage with diverse learners in diverse classrooms. Issues of diversity thus needed a much more practical application. Thus, the study was perceived by participants to be successful in identifying the strategies needed to prepare student teachers to become effective, engaged teachers of literature, ascertaining how student teachers of literature can help their learners develop academically and socially, and discovering how student teachers can become agents of change. However, it needed to make explicit, possibly through different case studies through each cycle, how to work effectively in diverse classrooms, bearing in mind the histories of the participants.

The classrooms of the four interviewees revealed varying learner numbers, ranging from twenty-five learners in materially advantaged schools where resources and facilities were of a very high calibre, to sixty learners in materially disadvantaged schools where there was a dearth of resources and facilities. While the study focussed on the teacher as the primary resource, Zinzi revealed that it was frustrating for her, when she had to stand in front of the

class and could not walk among her learners. Thus, her overcrowded classroom with insufficient furniture and books was perceived by Zinzi as a factor that inhibits her lessons.

The interviews also revealed classrooms challenged by problems other than academic. Wesley, Laverne and Zinzi noted serious socio-economic problems among learners at their schools, citing issues of teenage pregnancies, learners being affected by AIDS, lack of food, violence, drug abuse, failures, and absenteeism, among others. During a telephonic follow-up interview, Anisha also noted that there were instances of teenage pregnancies and drug abuse at her school. While Wesley provided food for his class of learners, Laverne's principal had initiated a more comprehensive feeding scheme for learners. Thus, teachers had to deal, on a daily basis, with both academic and socio-economic challenges and yet were equipped to handle just the academic ones. It is impossible to imagine teachers trying to ignore the harsh realities and brutal truths that learners are forced to face in their pursuit of academic goals. Unfortunately, while such truths were alluded to many times in the study, it was not an explicit aspect of the study, and yet, because of its wide-spread prevalence, it should have been. Thus, not making clear unambiguous references to the various challenges facing learners in South African schools was a limitation of the study.

Anisha's lessons were mentored by both the head of department and the principal, and they played a strong role in ensuring that Anisha was acclimatised to the school environment and school ethos. Anisha found the mentoring empowering. On the other hand, Wesley's perception of his head of department was negative, and he experienced her insistence on her choices and her threats about his employment as oppressive and limiting. While Laverne appreciated the support and guidance of her colleagues and principal who responded to her queries and concerns, Zinzi had no one to check on her or ask if she needs help academically. However, she, on her own, volunteered her concerns and shared her ideas at meetings. All interviewees demonstrated an ability to make their situations work, despite some very difficult circumstances. Findings also revealed, however, that teachers and principals at the two academically successful schools made a greater effort to support a novice teacher than did the two others. It is possible that those teachers and principals understood the importance of maintaining their academic success and thus needed to ensure that novice teachers acclimatised easily. It is also possible that the four novice teachers, who indicated that they found the study useful, would and did use the skills, experiences and principles of the study to find their spaces in the schools at which they were located.

While Anisha's school was materially advantaged and produced very good results academically, Laverne's school also did well with considerably fewer material resources. Both schools were perceived to have very committed members of staff and very strong leaders. In Anisha's school, the principal was an important, effective teacher herself who challenged the learners to do better; in Lavern's school the principal faced challenges, confronted problems and found solutions to obstacles. In many ways, the principal was an agent of change and thus a good role model to Laverne. In Wesley's school the principal and teachers were perceived to be negative about the learners; in Zinzi's school, which was deemed to be dysfunctional, the teachers wanted assistance and indicated a willingness to learn how to improve the state of the school. In addition, Zinzi believed that she had to serve as an agent of change to effect changes in her class and school. Thus, the findings indicated that increased material resources did not necessarily produce academic success. What did serve as an indicator of success was teacher commitment and strong leadership. While Zinzi wanted to make a difference to her learners because 'they are mine ... they are from my township', Wesley's colleagues felt no such inclination and seemed to perceive the learners as others that were different to them. Wesley's colleagues failed to recognise learners as children and human beings who wanted to learn.

While at Anisha's school, teachers used creative, innovative ways of teaching, and were fortunate to have an abundance of resources at their disposal and learners who could afford to embark on educational trips, the teachers at Zinzi's school relied on teacher-centred lessons with minimal learner engagement and learners were in no position to pay for outings. While Wesley got learners to raise funds for their outing to the theatre, he added that he provided additional funds. It is possible that such material interventions on Wesley's part will cease at some point, indicating that some learners will experience extensive stimulation and others will not. Thus it is the teacher's lesson in the classroom that has to serve as a catalyst for the extension of learners' thinking and to expose them, through the lessons, to worlds and experiences that they will not be able to visit. In addition, while teachers and the principal at Anisha's school challenged learners' thinking, Wesley's head of department wanted him to avoid topics she considered taboo, including race. Thus, the teaching and learning process can grow or stifle learners, depending on the underlying philosophy of the teacher. An important finding from the study, however, was that Zinzi's colleagues, who appeared to have succumbed to the failure of the school, expressed an interest in improving their lessons and changing their mindsets, and at the time of writing the thesis, that process was underway. In

many ways, Zinzi served as an agent of change not just to her learners, but to other teachers both in and out of her school. Her principal, too, recognised her as someone who could make a difference.

In their classrooms, all interviewees used largely learner-centred lessons to engage their learners. Strategies such as class discussions, pair and group-work, drama techniques, films and DVDs, and reading aloud, among others, were cited. Of significance were their reasons for choosing strategies, with interviewees noting that learners, whose home language was not English, were encouraged to speak, practice the language, and hear the language being spoken or read. They also indicated that they questioned and challenged learners' ideas, and applied the issues in the texts to learners' lives. Thus, interviewees were using issues in the texts to help learners grow and develop academically and socially. Wesley and Zinzi mentioned homework, with Wesley providing incentives for doing homework and Zinzi indicating that learners failed to do homework, sometimes with good reason. While Wesley had worked out strategies to persuade learners to do work at home, Zinzi appeared not to have found a solution. It is possible that she has concluded that she needed to focus her attention on other more pressing issues of concern in her classroom.

All interviewees were clear about what they want for their learners. Anisha wanted to use the texts to expose learners to different cultures and social classes and to show them that people have similar needs and wants, despite outward differences; Wesley wanted his learners to succeed and he let them know that he cared about them; Laverne tried to help her learners with their problems and realised that she needed physical, mental and emotional strength to be a teacher; Zinzi tried to motivate and encourage her learners, who mostly wanted to improve their lot, and she noted that she could not abandon her learners and needed interventions. While Anisha felt 'grateful' and Laverne felt 'blessed' to be at their schools, Wesley and Zinzi recognised the challenges of their teaching and learning contexts and wanted to make a difference to learners' lives. Thus, all four novice teachers, while teaching in varied contexts and being aware of many different challenges, were committed to and aware of making a difference to their learners.

Of the study, all interviewees believe that the study had been useful to them, noting that it had been vital to their training, taught them how to cope, showed them how to reflect and gave them confidence. When speaking about the study, Laverne and Anisha referred to it as 'our study' indicating ownership of the process, and Wesley believed that it was the only relevant,

significant part of his university degree. Thus, the study was perceived to be successful. However, limitations were highlighted and suggestions on how to improve were offered. Interviewees indicated that they needed to have been made aware of the demands and difficulties of marking, preparing, performing administrative duties, and negotiating a high workload. Three interviewees also noted that the lectures failed to point out that teaching and being a teacher were very difficult. In addition, the study made no mention of how to deal with the myriad problems facing learners on a daily basis. While the research participants engaged with being teachers and teachers of English in particular, the study did not equip them to step out of their prescribed roles to perform functions that were not part of their training. These perceived flaws in the study needed to be acknowledged and considered for future research.

### **6.7. Conclusion: Questions that emerged from novice teachers' experiences**

After analysing the data from the novice teachers' interviews, the researcher was left with more questions than answers. If McPherson's (2000) findings that teachers often imitate their colleagues are true, will Anisha and Laverne have excellent role models in the principal and teachers at their schools, and would Wesley overcome his attitudes and become like his head of department? If Lortie's (1975) conclusions that the school's organisation usually proves more powerful than teacher education programmes are correct, would Zinzi succumb to the practices of her colleagues? If Tatto's (1998) findings that social and political forces in a school mediate the influence of teacher education programmes are accurate, would Wesley succumb to the racist and homophobic philosophies of his colleagues? These and other questions could not be answered within the scope of this study but suggested directions for further research. However, the study had created an awareness of agency and voice in all participants and had empowered many of them to understand their roles and functions as teachers of literature and as agents of change.

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

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## 7.1. Introduction

By the end of this study the researcher was able to re-affirm the contention that if student teachers are empowered with sound disciplinary knowledge, effective pedagogical tools and an understanding of how to bring about academic and social change, then they can make a difference to the lives of their learners, irrespective of resources and contexts. Six cycles in a participatory action research study, using literary texts and critical pedagogy as catalysts, were used to enable student teachers of literature to become agents of change. While the teacher education programme in which the participants enrolled provided content and pedagogical knowledge, they believed that the programme failed to empower them to serve as agents of change in their classrooms and beyond. The study was deemed important and necessary by the researcher and the participants to prepare participants to become agents of academic and social change.

In the study, the researcher drew on the knowledge from participatory action research, critical pedagogy and literary texts to enable change agency. The thesis adds to the discourses on teacher education, participatory action research, critical pedagogy and change agency and contributes to knowledge by showing that using participatory action research and critical pedagogy in a lecture-room is feasible and useful in enabling the transformation and empowerment of students.

In this final chapter, the research findings are synthesised before the theoretical, methodological and practice implications are considered. The limitations of the study are evaluated and recommendations for further research are made.

## 7.2. Synthesis of research findings

The presentation of the research findings is shaped by the three research questions that guided the study.

### 7.2.1. What strategies can be used to prepare student teachers to become effective, engaged teachers of literature?

One of the aims of the study was to prepare student teachers, the participants in this study, to become effective, engaged teachers of literature. It was assumed that if they knew how to become effective and engaged in their teaching practices, then their learners would also

become effective, engaged learners. Thus, the participants needed to experience modelling, active experiential participation and explicit teaching in the lectures and in the research process.

To enable active participation, the participants needed to feel a sense of trust and respect in the lecture-room before they engaged in interactive, co-operative teaching and learning. Thus, the findings indicated that an enabling, non-threatening, comfortable environment supports the use of effective, engaging strategies. The participants understood, as well, that such an environment needs to be created in their own classrooms for optimum teaching and learning.

As a participant in the research process, the researcher was aware of herself modelling effective, engaging strategies. She was aware that while she was the participants' lecturer, curriculum designer and assessor, she was also a participant in the study and had to mediate the two roles mindfully. At the same time, the participants were reflecting on how she was teaching and engaging with them. While the principles of critical pedagogy, change agency and participatory action research were being interrogated and evaluated, the researcher was being evaluated on how she lived the principles. Thus, her words and actions were being judged and she needed to engage with the participants in ways that they could possibly draw on in their own classrooms. The participants consequently realised that being a teacher comes with responsibilities, including those of being prepared and respecting learners and their opinions, among others. Only then can teachers effectively engage learners.

To engage the participants, the researcher needed to scaffold their understanding. The study found that the researcher had to take the participants' prior knowledge and histories into account before teaching. Similarly, a teacher has to build on the knowledge and capital that is present in a classroom to enable learners' insights into and knowledge of a subject. A teacher has to awaken prior knowledge before assuming understanding.

Another important finding emerged from the participants indicating their insecurities about preparations for lessons. The significant decision taken by them to empower themselves by accessing resources, developing research skills and leading the lectures proved successful. They assumed agency, determined their course of progress and appeared more confident to take charge. When participants are enabled to assume agency for their own learning, they work independently and are able to suggest how to make learning more efficient. Thus, student teachers' proficiencies need to be developed and affirmed to produce teachers who are not just engaging, but self-assured as well. The researcher also found that there was a need to

re-acquaint the participants with objectives already accomplished and re-affirm goals already reached before proceeding with new skills, a finding that needs to be taken into school classrooms as well.

The researcher found that if the participants believe that they are learning skills that will prove valuable to them, they will accept the challenges of the learning experience. Even if they are initially wary of interactive, engaging strategies, they will embrace the strategies when they understand that they will be used in an environment of trust. Thus, for a student teacher to become an effective, engaged teacher of literature, or of any other subject, s/he has to use strategies that are creative, interactive and co-operative in a classroom that respects and values learners' contributions. However, while a strategy may be creative and engaging, the task needs to have an explicit focus and be specific and clear in its purpose. The study realised that without a clear, explicitly apparent purpose, a strategy, no matter how creative, serves no real function.

As the cycles unfolded, the participants became confident and comfortable working co-operatively with others, and seemed secure challenging the opinions of other participants and the researcher and reflecting on their own beliefs and attitudes. The findings indicated that if the participants' views are respected, they will work in a manner characterised by honesty, assertiveness and support. They appeared to have agency and voice and yet they interacted with respect and consideration for others. Thus, the study indicated that the participants understand that having agency and voice does not mean that others cannot have agency and voice as well.

By the end of the study, the participants could identify effective, engaging strategies and explain why they would work, and could describe an effective nurturing learning environment and the dispositions teachers need to become effective, engaged teachers of literature. However, they believed that experiences of the study had equipped them, as the primary resource in the classroom, to deal with other subjects as well.

Findings emerged from areas out of the lecture-room as well. After cycle four, the participants went on Teaching Practice. Findings from Teaching Practice indicated that although all participants expressed their conviction that using effective, engaging teaching strategies was essential in classrooms, some failed to engage their learners in their lessons. Although many participants employed interactive teaching and learning strategies, some preferred to teach as other teachers in the school taught. Thus, the findings indicated that while the participants

may articulate ideal teaching and learning practices, it does not mean that they will necessarily implement those practices in classrooms.

What is significant is that during Teaching Practice, many participants used the strategies experienced in the lecture-room, and some took risks trying new strategies. What successful participants could identify was that the use of democratic participation, voice and agency in the lecture-room served as guidelines for the environments they created during Teaching Practice and which they wanted to create in their own classrooms. They also identified preparation as the key to effective lessons.

Findings also revealed the importance of mentor teachers in the Teaching Practice process in helping student teachers define their roles and functions as teachers. In addition, the findings from Teaching Practice indicated that in some schools, an ethos of effective teaching and learning prevails with teachers doing effective work despite challenges in their environments. In contrast, some schools appear to lack efficient teachers, and teaching and learning appear to be minimised. Thus, the way teachers understand their roles and functions seems to determine the ethos in a school. When teachers enter a new teaching environment, they have to decide whether to embrace or challenge the culture present in the environment. Challenging an oppressive or ineffective culture might prove very difficult but necessary to transform an apparently deficient system.

The four novice teachers interviewed after the study was over reflected that they used learner-centred lessons to engage their learners. Three of the interviewees found the strategies effective in engaging second-language learners of English and believed that the strategies enable the learning of the language. However, while the study emphasised the teacher as the primary resource who could teach in all contexts, a novice teacher found the lack of resources (of textbooks and furniture) and overcrowded classrooms severely debilitating. Thus, while the study prepared student teachers to become effective, engaged teachers of literature, many more realities of the South African schooling system needed to be considered by all the participants during the research process to enable a more informed understanding of how to teach and learn in a South African classroom.

### **7.2.2. How can student teachers use literature to help their learners develop academically and socially?**

The second aspect of the study was to determine how teachers could use literary texts to help their learners develop academically and socially. The participants in the study needed to understand and experience using texts as catalysts to effect transformation. Through the six

cycles, the participants focussed on many issues, such as race, class, gender, patriarchy, tolerance, resilience, kindness, and identity, among others, that emerged from the texts. They also considered how they would create awareness of the issues in their classrooms. In addition, they aimed to determine the potential of literary texts to engage with issues of power, control and oppression, and use literary texts to enable agency, voice and democratic participation in learners.

Very early in the research process (in cycle one), two important findings emerged. The first finding indicated that teachers, as persons in positions of power, need to reflect on their practices to ascertain the extent to which they are imposing their personal ideologies on their learners. The second finding was that the participants could not and did not articulate perceptions of racial tensions within the group. When the finding was brought to their attention, some participants revealed that they felt disrespected and ignored by their peers. However, there was an overwhelming feeling of not wanting to engage with perceived racial tensions. Sensing the participants' resistance to confronting racial and other forms of oppression, the researcher alerted them to the irony of dealing with issues of race, class, gender and identity in literary texts but being unable and unwilling to confront their own practices and behaviours.

After extensive deliberations on practices, the participants understood that their conduct needed to reflect an emancipatory, empowering agenda. In addition, they were asked to contemplate how their actions could be repeated in their classrooms, thus sustaining oppressive practices. It was significant that, after deliberation and reflection, they indicated a need to unlearn behaviours and constantly reflect on how they behave and the choices they make. Thus, the study found that unless forms of oppression are confronted, they can be perpetuated. Besides, engaging with social justice issues of race, class, gender and identity in literary or other texts cannot be divorced from the way teachers live their lives. If a teacher is inherently racist or homophobic, for example, it is difficult to imagine how s/he will engage with issues of race or sexuality without imposing his/-her oppressive ideology.

The researcher also found that contradictions emerged in how the participants judged characters and events in literary texts and how they lived their lives. Thus, for example, they could judge a character negatively for his/-her choices, but would display similar behaviour in their own lives. Further, they could articulate the need to challenge stereotypes and biases, but would resort to stereotyping people themselves. In addition, they understood that corporal

punishment was illegal and yet passed it off as accepted behaviour. Thus, the inconsistencies had to be highlighted, discussed and evaluated and self-reflection became an important part of the study.

On being made aware of the contradictions, the participants had to choose what they wanted to do to address the inconsistencies. They were asked to reflect carefully on their ideological and philosophical frames of reference to determine how to act and the kinds of teachers that they wanted to become. Thus, it was found that while certain guiding principles can frame a study, unless a longitudinal study is undertaken, it is difficult to know whether the participants embrace the principles outside the study.

As the cycles proceeded, the participants became more astute and confident when studying literary texts, were able to identify social justice issues in the texts and developed clear ideas of how to use the texts to address issues of importance in their classrooms. In addition, they recognised that they had to work with texts by first considering learners' contexts and histories. However, the researcher and participants failed to make explicit how to use issues in texts to help learners deal with socio-economic challenges in their contexts. Thus, while the issues in a literary text may be used to develop learners academically and socially, engagement with the issues that emerged from the texts needed to be considered on a more practical and basic level in order to enable learners to cope with the trials that face them on a daily basis. In other words, learners need to make the link between issues in a text and how those issues may be confronted and engaged with in their own lives.

As the cycles continued, the participants themselves developed academically and socially and gained agency and voice. The study found that active engagement involving making choices, posing questions and reflecting on decisions enables participants' development and empowerment. They understood that critical reflection is essential for teachers who need to evaluate their actions and thought-processes in and out of the classroom.

### **7.2.3. How can student teachers become agents of academic and social change?**

Even before the study began, the participants understood that the aim of the study was for student teachers of literature to become agents of change. Their commitment to moving from potentiality and possibility to actuality and tangibility was evident even prior to the study, as baseline information indicated.

However, initial findings in cycle one indicated that the participants believed that a teacher could be defined as an agent of change if s/he merely used innovative teaching methods. After

discussions and engagement with readings, they understood that the roles and functions of a change agent involved pursuing and embracing possibilities for change and a commitment to improving the lives of their learners through interventions (Priestly et al. 2012). In addition, they recognised that a change agent has to enable learners to develop their full capacity as individuals, be able to interact democratically with others, and have a sense of responsibility to others (Adams et al. 2007). At the end of cycle one, the participants revealed, in anonymous student evaluations, that the lectures had successfully highlighted the roles and functions of being a teacher and a change agent.

Findings from cycle one also indicated that while most participants believed South African teachers to be ineffective, most participants envisaged themselves as effective teachers of literature and agents of change in the future. The findings indicated that the repeated discussions about change agency and the overt, explicit teaching about the concept may have inspired the participants to see themselves as potential agents of change.

As the study progressed, the findings indicated that explicit discussions about change agency were necessary to keep the participants focussed. Failure to refer regularly to definitions, roles and functions of change agents resulted in the participants moving their attention away from the concepts surrounding change agency. However, explicit engagement with issues of agency resulted in their renewed commitment to becoming agents of change in the literature classroom, recognition of the possibilities for transformation and clarity in defining an agent of change. They also understood the challenges that entailed becoming an agent of change. Thus, findings indicated that while the participants could visualise an agent of change, they could also recognise the responsibilities and difficulties associated with the role.

By the end of the study, an important finding was the participants' noting that they would find it difficult to teach any subject without including aspects of change agency. Significantly, they also recognised that change agency is an integral part of a teacher's identity. By the end of the study, all the participants noted that teachers need to be agents of change in their classrooms, and the majority indicated that they would be effective teachers of literature who will serve as agents of change in their classrooms. The findings indicated that all participants understood the value of change agency in a classroom and aspired to achieve change agency. However, they realised that the process of becoming an agent of change is on-going, dynamic and influenced by contextual factors.

Early in the study, findings revealed that the participants were clear about their own personal identities but were uncertain about the specific roles and functions that comprised a teacher's identity. Findings revealed that they could not recognise the aspect of teacher-in-the-making being part of their identities, and could not recognise that they were moving from the potentiality of becoming a teacher towards the actuality of being a teacher. While their student activities were preparing them to become teachers, they still saw themselves primarily as students. However, by the end of the study, findings indicated that they had a clearer understanding of becoming both teachers and agents of change.

Findings also revealed that the participants understood the need for a teacher to understand his/-her roles and functions and aspire to make a difference in the classroom. They noted that teachers of literature need to be positive role models, capable of motivating learners, empowered to engage in reflection, and able to teach learners how to become critical, active citizens. Thus, the finding revealed that the participants recognised the significance of a teacher having an activist agenda that enables learners' own agency, participation, reflection and voice.

Overall, findings revealed the participants' views that issues of transformation, empowerment and social justice need to be included in modules undertaken in their teacher education degrees. What the study could not assess was the extent to which ideas gleaned from the study were transferred to the participants' school classrooms. However, the four novice teachers who were interviewed after the study demonstrated, through concrete examples, their commitment to making a difference to their learners' lives and serving as agents of change in their classrooms.

### **7.3. Theoretical implications of the study**

This study advocated an empowerment and transformation agenda using literary texts and critical pedagogy to achieve its aims. The aims of the study were to develop and empower student teachers of literature to use literary texts as a means to confront the challenges of the realities of South Africa's education system and for student teachers to recognise the effects of the historical, economic, social and political contexts on the environments in which they lived, studied and would work. Using the core principles of critical pedagogy and working with literary texts as catalysts, the participants in the study committed themselves to transformation towards justice, equality, democracy and freedom. With hindsight, the researcher and participants ought to have embraced the idea that justice, equality, democracy

and freedom are the starting points, not the end goal of the study, then the insights from which knowledge is created could have been found communally in the participatory nature of the study (Ranciere 1991).

The theoretical implications of the study are many. Firstly, the study revealed the importance of creating a humanising pedagogy that respects, uses and builds on the participants' cultural capital within the teaching and learning context (Bartolome 2009) and the need to recognise whose capital is affirmed and valued and whose is ignored (Bourdieu and Passeron 1997). Besides acknowledging and respecting the cultural capital in a teaching and learning environment, the researcher recognised the value of affirming the historical, social, economic and political contexts that shape the participants' lives (Giroux 2009). However, on reflection after the study, the researcher realised that the contexts that shaped her life and the capital with which she entered the research process were rarely articulated within the study (and participants did not ask her for it) and that omission on her part might be a limitation of the study.

A second theoretical implication is the participants' recognition of the importance of using an engaged pedagogy (hooks 1994) to provide a supportive, non-threatening, co-operative environment that enables empowerment and transformation. However, on contemplating the study, the researcher realises that the elements of provocation and discomfort were integral to thinking and reflecting during the collaborative activities and there was a need to disrupt participants' encounters with issues. Nevertheless, the provocation and discomfort occurred in supportive environments of trust.

The importance of active engagement and dialogue to facilitate empowerment and transformation (Freire 1999; Giroux 2009) is the third theoretical implication. While active engagement and dialogue initially appeared to prove unfamiliar to the participants' understanding of lectures, the researcher believed she had to enable them to learn how to ask questions and challenge assumptions (Cochran-Smith 1991). Thus, the researcher provided opportunities for the participants to experience and develop agency, voice and democratic participation in constructing meaning together (Freire 1970) and to recognise the possibilities for change (Giroux 1983). However, early in the study, participants took on active agency for their intellectual emancipation (Ranciere 1991) and became progressively less reliant on the researcher. An unanticipated by-product of the research was participants' awareness that some

lecturers resisted certain questions and challenges and participants had to learn to negotiate different student voices with different lecturers.

A fourth theoretical implication of the study is the value of regular critical reflection that evaluates actions and beliefs. It is believed that the use of critical reflection on the part of the participants and the researcher provided some idea of what it means to be a transformative intellectual (Giroux 1988). While the study enabled discussions and evaluations of the principles of critical pedagogy, a strength of the study has been the participants' ability to move beyond talking about critical pedagogy. When they learned how to employ the principles of critical pedagogy in their social and professional relationships, they were able to develop a better understanding of the contradictions and confusions in their own lives, and learn that they needed to make choices about how to act. Of importance was their recognition of the significance of having a strong philosophical and ideological underpinning to their social relationships, professional practices and conceptions of knowledge (Ladson-Billings 2009). By the end of the study, they were able to recognise the skills and dispositions that characterised agents of change in the classroom. The study has been able to demonstrate that grappling with issues of agency, voice and democratic participation is in itself educational, liberating and transformative.

A fifth implication of using critical pedagogy was the participants' recognition that teacher education programmes have a significant and critical role to play in the transformation of schools. The findings indicated that teacher education programmes should be designed to challenge student teachers to develop and advance democratic ideals and consequently enable student teachers to enter schools understanding how to advance an empowerment and transformation agenda. Thus, student teachers need to know how to disrupt oppressive, discriminatory classroom practices, as well as how to examine and confront prejudices of their own and of others in their teaching (and other) environments (Ladson-Billings 1999; Lane, Lacefield-Parachini and Isken 2003). By failing to engage with issues central to critical pedagogy, teacher education programmes could replicate deficiencies embedded in the system. While the participants have left the study to work in school classrooms, the researcher has remained in a teacher education programme to contemplate how to advance an empowerment and transformation agenda within and beyond her lecture-rooms. While colleagues are interested in the study's findings, it is not clear at this point to what extent they will embrace the study's ideals.

Another important theoretical implication of the study was the participants' ability to identify possible limitations to employing a critical pedagogy approach. They interrogated the power relations intrinsic in teaching and learning contexts, understood that teachers and learners share unequal power relationships and were able to recognise how they could contribute to forms of oppression that may arise in their classrooms. The possibility of persons in power imposing values on those less powerful led to their decision to use the South African national constitution to guide their practices. The constitution also helped them to reflect critically on the ideological and philosophical foundations that define ideas of being teachers and of teaching. The participants, therefore, indicated that they have developed the capacity to find solutions to such challenges.

Ultimately, critical pedagogy framed the research, but did not confine the parameters of the research process, as is recommended by critical pedagogy theorists (e.g. Freire 1999). While critical pedagogy has been criticised by some researchers for failing to address issues of patriarchy (Ellsworth 1989; Gore 1993) and racism (Darder, Baltodarno and Torres 2009), this study made the two issues central to the analysis of the selected literary texts and appears to have empowered the participants to engage with and confront patriarchy and racism. Further, while critical pedagogy has been accused by some researchers of fostering individualism over communal concerns (Bowers 1987; Gur-Ze'en 1998), the study worked with a community of student teachers who used literary texts to embrace the possibilities for change within their communities of learners and possibly beyond. Thus, while the underlying principles of critical pedagogy informed the study, the participants interrogated concepts and used those concepts that resonated with the study and discarded others. They also made decisions and grappled with the theory as different situations arose.

#### **7.4. Methodological implications of the study**

Using a system of interventions in a participatory action research study, the participants worked towards achieving the aims of the study (outlined in chapter one). The participants worked with the researcher to plan, act, reflect and re-plan in a collaborative process that spanned two years. The methods of comprehension, critical reflection, critique and theorising were designed to inform, enlighten, emancipate, transform, and advance participants towards agency in their literature classrooms.

The first methodological implication of the study was the researcher's and the participants' understanding that research outcomes, action outcomes and critical reflection can work

together to provide practical solutions to issues of concern. Thus, action and reflection together with theory and practice may be used to understand, confront and improve systems and practices (Reason and Bradbury 2001; Reason and Bradbury 2003).

The second implication of using participatory action research was that the participants were equipped to plan solutions, devise interventions, analyse and verify data and reflect on successes and failures. While the participants were not formally taught how to conduct research, they experienced all aspects of the process, except the writing up of the findings (in the form of this thesis). Their involvement in the various stages of the participatory action research cycles has equipped them to conduct research in their own classrooms. The different cycles of the study were able to invest control in the participants and just their participation in the study served to enable some empowerment and transformation. The study demonstrated that when the participants had a vested interest in the study, they wanted to share, analyse and verify data. When they understood that the study would be adapted in response to their direct needs, they embraced it as their own and ensured that their voices were heard. A consequence of the study was that the participants embraced the control of the study and were empowered to shape its course. As a result, they exerted influence over the transformation of their lives (Boog 2003). This implication of using participatory action research was, for the researcher, the most liberating aspect of the study.

A third implication was the significance of constant, active dialogue and critical reflection to enable transformation. Dialogue between the researcher and the participants during the teaching and learning process characterised the entire study (Levin 1994; Flood 1998), and the researcher's daily reflections and the researcher's and the participants' reflections at the end of each cycle facilitated deliberations on the effects of the research process. The researcher and the participants could reflect on their practices and could question their own long-held views and those of others. The critical reflections allowed for understandings and improvements of practices and ways of doing and being. The use of critical reflection on a regular basis also had a significant impact on the identities of the researcher and the participants and the ways in which they chose to act. Ultimately, critical reflection played a significant role in shaping who the researcher and the participants became. In addition, the emphasis on critical reflection at the end of each of the six cycles enabled the participants to make informed decisions based on well-thought out ideas. Their abilities to contemplate and deliberate on actions, experiences and ideas gleaned from the study prepared them for similar reflections in their own classrooms. Active, conscious reflection can enable teachers to

recognise their strengths and shortcomings, and can allow them to make changes to their practices and attitudes in their classrooms. The participants identified the benefits of critical reflection in their growth and development and, it is hoped, they will equip their learners to reflect critically as well.

By the end of the study, all the participants had a clear understanding of themselves as agents of change who need to have a clear vision of their roles and functions, ethical and democratic principles, and a commitment to improving their own and their learners' lives. They also understood the need for life-long learning and regular reflection on their professional identities. While it is difficult to assess concepts of emancipation, agency, empowerment and democratic participation within the confines of the study, the participants did establish and understand, with clarity, what their goals, values, capacities, and functions are, and that represents an important starting point for them to take it further when in their own classrooms.

At the end of the sixth and final cycle, the researcher and the participants stepped out of the research process. However, the process of the participants becoming agents of change is a long-term one in their school environments. They left the research process equipped with some of the skills and capacities to continue the transformation of themselves and their learners, and they understood that they need to continue to interrogate any unanswered questions and reflect critically on their doubts and uncertainties.

For the researcher, the participatory action research process entailed daily reflections alone to assess the progress of the study. While she was the facilitator and researcher in the participatory action research study, she was also the participants' lecturer and assessor, and thus had the power to determine practices. To serve as the lecturer and assessor entailed a thorough preparedness to teach and assess the literary texts and literary theories using specific pedagogical strategies. It also entailed integrating issues from the texts to facilitate engagement with academic and social change and enabling the participants to become agents of change. The roles of facilitator and researcher were shared with the participants, such that data analysis and verification, and critical reflection and planning for the next cycle were undertaken collaboratively. The researcher had, therefore, to mediate the process very carefully, to enable all the roles to function successfully. The need for extensive reading on participatory action research and careful, critical reflection daily forced the researcher to try to integrate the roles as seamlessly as possible, without imposing her inherent power and privileges. Further, the researcher made a conscious effort to ensure that the researcher-

participant relationship was a dialogical one where both the researcher and the participants contributed to the research process, to the knowledge generated, and to the evaluation of the process.

### **7.5. Implications for the researcher's practice**

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for the researcher's present and future practice. The first implication for practice is the recognition by the researcher that the lecturer and students are the primary and most important resources in the lecture-room. As a resource, the lecturer has to facilitate effective teaching and learning where all students are affirmed, allowed to grow, and given space to think, talk and work with others to discover and create knowledge and make decisions. Thus, teaching and learning has to occur in nurturing lecture-rooms, characterised by trust and respect, that allow students to be successful in their learning endeavours. For the participants to be successful, they have to engage actively with knowledge by asking questions, thinking critically, and solving problems. A second implication for practice is the recognition by the researcher that a literary text and literary theories may be used as catalysts to develop students academically and socially. By using active engagement with literary texts, students get to speak, listen, read and write to achieve goals.

Thirdly, there is a distinct pedagogic shift in the researcher's practices where the researcher has to identify and implement the most feasible and effective ways to incorporate a humanising pedagogy into her lecture-rooms (Bartolome 1994; 2009; Ladson-Billings 1998; 2009). The pedagogic shift has highlighted many oppressive, albeit unintended, practices used by the researcher in the past. The researcher realises that what the participants brought to the research and shared with the group has inspired her to aim to become a better lecturer. Participants' realities, histories and perspectives proved to be a rich source from which to draw when studying the various texts. In the past, the researcher largely ignored such capital or considered it cursorily. In addition, the researcher tended to produce lectures that were largely lecturer-centred and failed to truly engage students except with a few questions throughout the lecture. Thus, the researcher was motivated to undertake greater research to explore subject matter and pedagogical strategies to become effective in the lecture-room and to determine how to use the literary texts to enable critical engagement. She had to determine which teaching strategies enabled co-operative learning, challenged students to work hard,

prompted questions and made students excited and engaged in what they recognised to be valuable and useful activities.

Fourthly, the researcher realised the value of regular, active reflection in her professional and personal life. Her reflections enabled a critique of her practices, decisions and actions, and the recognition that it is essential to question. Her critique enabled modifications in how she engaged with people, including the participants, colleagues, family and friends. A changed outlook helped the researcher re-evaluate her priorities, philosophies and ideologies in her professional and personal life and understand the significance of keeping an open mind. However, the researcher realises that the process is on-going and dynamic.

Fifthly, the researcher understands that authentic professional development has to be located in the lecture-room, and the study forced the researcher to account for her actions, practices and ways of being as a teacher. By being consciously aware of her practices, the researcher has aimed to serve as an effective role-model to the participants of how to engage learners. Lecturers, by virtue of their practices, are open to scrutiny by their students and need to bring their most authentic selves to their lecture-rooms. Further, by exploring with the participants the strategies used in the lecture-room, the participants and researcher were able to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies. In this way, the researcher evaluated her practices and the participants learned how to account for their actions, practices and ways of being as teachers. The research process, as a work in progress, was thus a catalyst for change and transformation for all persons involved in the study, including the researcher.

Finally, the researcher had to understand her role as a postgraduate student and thesis writer. The researcher kept a personal journal throughout the research process and wrote freely and without restrictions on all aspects, professional and personal, that impacted on the research process and the research writing. However, writing the thesis required very specific ways of thinking and being on paper. While the research process was critically reflected on individually and with the group, and the journal writing allowed for free expression of emotions and reactions to happenings in the study, the thesis needed to consider the participatory action research process as it unfolded in the moment and it had to evaluate the process after careful contemplation and deliberation. The processes thus played out in numerous configurations as the researcher searched for what it was that she was learning.

Writing and re-writing the thesis assisted the researcher to understand the impact of research events and processes, and served to assist the research process. In the writing and re-writing,

the cyclical nature of the participatory action research was supported and reinforced. And yet, while the participatory action research study was a collaborative event that affirmed and respected many views, the writing of the thesis was an individual one that aimed to authentically and truthfully represent the research process and the views and experiences of the participants. While the writing of the thesis was ongoing, it was only after the study ended that the researcher could fully recognise the uncertainty that existed between the roles of dissertation writer and participatory action research participant. While the study affirmed transparency and collaboration, writing alone, in some ways, appeared as a betrayal of the values of participatory action research. While the researcher privileged the participatory action research persona over the thesis writer persona while the study was in progress, once it was over, the thesis writer had to come to the fore. To enable authenticity and veracity, it was thus essential for the researcher to engage in ongoing action, reflection and self-analysis beyond the research activity.

While the researcher taught students studying English Education the processes, principles, theories and assumptions associated with writing practices, the writing of the thesis challenged the researcher to re-think the processes and strategies involved in the writing process. Thus, the writing, re-writing and reflections on the writing served to strengthen the researcher's teaching of writing by helping her to understand how to develop skills to empower those students who believe they cannot write successfully. The participatory action research process has helped teach the researcher how to reflect on her writing practices and to develop the skills of reading, writing, analysis and communication to use in both the research and writing processes. Thus, the use of analytical skills and writing skills significantly facilitated the researcher's on-going learning and self-empowerment.

## **7.6. Limitations of the study**

Like most studies, this study has had its share of limitations. The first limitation involved the participatory action research process. The researcher, rather than the participants, collected data and chose samples of the participants for data collection. While the participants planned the participatory action research cycles, assisted with analysis and determined interventions, they were not involved in every step of the research process. Instead, the participants were informed about the processes involved in data collection and sampling. The participants' involvement in data collection and sampling might have had an important effect on the findings. If the study were done again, the researcher would investigate the feasibility of

involving the participants in drawing up data collection instruments and collecting data in some form.

A second limitation of the study was its lack of sufficient focus on literacy concerns. Given that the student teachers were preparing to teach learners taking English as a home or first additional language, the study needed to focus more closely on the many literacies already present in a classroom (including proficiency in languages other than English, literacy practices from home including oral traditions, and multimodal textual practices) and the basic literacies that many learners lacked (such as reading, writing, speaking and listening). In South Africa, literacy challenges abound and the study needed to foreground the challenges and solutions more vigorously by enabling participants to embrace and affirm the literacy practices of culturally and linguistically diverse groups while emphasising the development of basic literacies in their learners. On a more practical note, while the basic literacies underpinned all aspects of the study, greater emphasis should have been placed on writing. While participants engaged actively with reading, speaking and listening, the use of more extensive writing activities would have enriched participants' understandings of the dynamics involved in literacy practices.

A third limitation involved the cursory discussions on addressing learners' social realities. While many of the social realities and issues found in literary texts were extensively engaged and the participants understood how to incorporate them into literature lessons, the participants also need to have some understanding of how to deal with such realities when they presented themselves in their classrooms. Exploring social challenges in literary texts is not the same as helping teachers and learners deal with the social challenges themselves. However, by addressing and engaging with social realities in texts, the opening is created for addressing and engaging with social realities in learners' lives. This study failed to address this concern.

A fourth limitation involved the curriculum and choice of texts used. When the researcher started the research, the curriculum and the texts used to mediate the curriculum had already been prescribed by the English Education curriculum committee. The researcher had to work with the texts stipulated on the reading lists and within the aims, outcomes and assessment criteria imposed by the committee. Further, the researcher wanted to ascertain the extent to which the study could work, irrespective of the texts used. This was not necessarily a negative aspect as it allowed the researcher to understand what teachers often face in schools where

curricula and texts are determined by the Department of Education or by the availability of texts in a school. However, the study could have taken a different slant had the researcher free reign in choosing the curriculum and literary texts.

### **7.7. Recommendations for further research**

This thesis offers five recommendations for further study.

- 7.7.1. Research could be undertaken to ascertain the impact of this study on the participant-teachers in years to come. For example, research could investigate whether the teachers who participated in the study have benefitted from the study, and to what extent, and whether they have incorporated any skills and knowledge from the study into their practices.
- 7.7.2. Research could focus on lecturers/teacher-educators in teacher education programmes. While lecturers in other programmes might be able to use the traditional face-to-face lecture mode, teacher education programmes are designed to prepare students to become teachers in classrooms, and the traditional face-to-face lecture mode is unsuitable for that environment. It is recommended that a participatory action research study be developed using co-operatively planned interventions by lecturers for lecturers. The cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection could be undertaken by lecturers and their peers to ascertain how to enable co-operative teaching and learning strategies. Many possibilities exist to take such research further, including co-teaching modules, teaching across disciplines, technology-enhanced teaching, and peer evaluations, among others. With many student teachers experiencing dysfunctional schools as their examples, teacher education programmes have an opportunity to provide alternate models for teachers-in-the-making.
- 7.7.3. It is recommended that research is needed to determine how teacher education programmes can explicitly include an empowering, transformative agenda where student teachers are taught how to use a critical orientation in their teaching and learning practices. In such a programme, which could encompass various modules, student teachers could be taught more than content and pedagogy. They would need to be given opportunities for critical reflection, democratic participation, dialogue, and critical thinking, among others.

- 7.7.4. Further research could be undertaken to transfer the study to other teacher education programmes nationally and/or internationally. Questions that need consideration are: who are the participants, in what contexts do they study and work, and what are the needs of the specific environments.
- 7.7.5. A study could be implemented with practising teachers in South Africa in a professional development process. Working with practising teachers of literature who would like to choose an empowerment and transformation agenda, the study could aim to achieve the objectives of this study while recognising the specific needs and contexts of the participating teachers. Thus, the study could focus on addressing literacy challenges, critical literacy, teacher dispositions, and the philosophies and ideologies underpinning the roles and functions of teachers of literature, among others.

## **7.8. Conclusion**

While South Africa has made many strides in education, many inequalities persist. Drawing on participatory action research, critical pedagogy and literary texts to enable change agency in a lecture-room at a School of Education, the researcher demonstrates that if student teachers are empowered with rigorous content knowledge, effective teaching strategies and the awareness of how to effect pedagogical and social change, they will be equipped to work in our classrooms and help to transform the lives of learners, despite diverse contexts and resources. The study adds to the discourses on teacher education, participatory action research, critical pedagogy and change agency, contributing to knowledge by showing that using participatory action research and critical pedagogy in a lecture-room is feasible and can enable the transformation and empowerment of students.

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**APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET for Head of School in which the study will occur**

Dear Respondent

The major objective of this PhD research study is to intervene, via participatory action research, in English Education lecture rooms so that student teachers become effective, engaged teachers of literature who serve as agents of change in their classrooms and who will help their learners grow both academically and socially.

To realise the purposes of the study, the researcher, together with the students will experience interventions in the lecture room via the teaching, materials and pedagogy, using the participatory action research spiral of cycles of observation, planning, action, and reflection to achieve goals. It is also essential at every stage of the research that all participants reflect, analyse, and theorise what the findings reveal and what is learned from the study.

There are no foreseeable risks to the students who will be third and fourth year Bachelor of Education degree students who are majoring in English Education. While students will not benefit materially, it is hoped that they will leave the research situation enriched as empowered teachers.

Student participation in interviews, observations, focus groups and filling in questionnaires is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the student is entitled. Students may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the student is otherwise entitled.

Anything students say during the research and all records relating to the students' participation in the research will be treated as confidential and not made publicly available. All students will be referred to by pseudonyms, if necessary.

Thank you for your participation.

Ansurie Pillay

Should you have any questions please contact:

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Supervisor: Prof. Priya Narismulu Ph. 031-260 2371

e-mail: Narismulug@ukzn.ac.za

You may retain this Information Sheet.

**INFORMED CONSENT: HEAD OF SCHOOL IN WHICH THE STUDY IS TO OCCUR:**

I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: Enabling student teachers of literature to become agents of change. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study and consent to allow students to take part in the study.

SIGNATURE OF HEAD OF SCHOOL

DATE

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## **APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET for Practicing Teachers**

Dear Teachers

The major objective of this PhD research study is to intervene, via participatory action research, in English Education lecture rooms so that student teachers become effective, engaged teachers of literature who serve as agents of change in their classrooms who will help their learners grow both academically and socially.

To realise the purposes of the study, the researcher, together with the students will experience interventions in the lecture room via the teaching, materials and pedagogy, using the participatory action research spiral of cycles of observation, planning, action, and reflection to achieve goals. It is also essential at every stage of the research that all participants reflect, analyse, and theorise what the findings reveal and what is learned from the study.

There are no foreseeable risks to any of the research participants. Participation in filling in questionnaires is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the teacher is entitled. Teachers may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the teacher is otherwise entitled. Anything teachers say during the research and all records relating to the teachers' participation in the research will be treated as confidential and not made publicly available. All teachers will be referred to by pseudonyms, if necessary.

Thank you for your participation.

Ansurie Pillay

Should you have any questions please contact:

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Supervisor: Prof Priya Narismulu Ph. 031-260 2371

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You may retain this Information Sheet.

**INFORMED CONSENT: PRACTICING TEACHERS**

I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: Enabling student teachers of literature to become agents of change. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study and consent to take part in the study.

I consent to participate in the following research activity: Filling in a questionnaire

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF TEACHER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**INFORMED CONSENT: PRACTICING TEACHERS**

I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: Enabling student teachers of literature to become agents of change. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent to take part in the study.

I consent to participate in the following research activity: Narrative research

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF TEACHER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**APPENDIX C: INFORMATION SHEET for Student Teachers**

Dear Student

The major objective of this PhD research study is to intervene, via participatory action research, in English Education lecture rooms so that student teachers become effective, engaged teachers of literature who serve as agents of change in their classrooms who will help their learners grow both academically and socially.

To realise the purposes of the study, the researcher, together with the students will experience interventions in the lecture room via the teaching, materials and pedagogy, using the participatory action research spiral of cycles of observation, planning, action, and reflection to achieve goals. It is also essential at every stage of the research that all participants reflect, analyse, and theorise what the findings reveal and what is learned from the study.

There are no foreseeable risks to the students who will be third and fourth year Bachelor of Education degree students who are majoring in English Education. While students will not benefit materially, it is hoped that they will leave the research situation enriched as empowered teachers.

Student participation in interviews, observations, focus groups and filling in questionnaires is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the student is entitled. Students may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the student is otherwise entitled.

Anything students say during the research and all records relating to the students' participation in the research will be treated as confidential and not made publicly available. All students will be referred to by pseudonyms, if necessary.

Thank you for your participation.

Ansurie Pillay

Should you have any questions please contact:

Researcher: Ansurie Pillay Tel. 260 3613 e-mail: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Prof Priya Narismulu Ph. 031-260 2371

e-mail: Narismulug@ukzn.ac.za

You may retain this Information Sheet.

**INFORMED CONSENT**

I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: Enabling student teachers of literature to become agents of change. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study and consent to take part in the study.

I consent to participate in the following research activities:

	Yes (please tick)	No (please tick)
Questionnaire		
Interview		
Focus Group		
Observation		
Written work		
Student evaluation		
Drawings		

_____ SIGNATURE OF STUDENT	_____ DATE
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**APPENDIX D: INFORMATION SHEET for Novice Teachers**

Dear Teachers

The major objective of this PhD research study is to intervene, via participatory action research, in English Education lecture rooms so that student teachers become effective, engaged teachers of literature who serve as agents of change in their classrooms and who will help their learners grow both academically and socially.

To realise the purposes of the study, the researcher, together with the students will experience interventions in the lecture room via the teaching, materials and pedagogy, using the participatory action research spiral of cycles of observation, planning, action, and reflection to achieve goals. It is also essential at every stage of the research that all participants reflect, analyse, and theorise what the findings reveal and what is learned from the study.

There are no foreseeable risks to any of the research participants. Participation in filling in questionnaires is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the teacher is entitled. Teachers may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the teacher is otherwise entitled. Anything teachers say during the research and all records relating to the teachers' participation in the research will be treated as confidential and not made publicly available. All teachers will be referred to by pseudonyms, if necessary.

Thank you for your participation.

Ansurie Pillay

Should you have any questions please contact:

Researcher: Ansurie Pillay Tel. 260 3613 e-mail: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Prof Priya Narismulu Ph. 031-260 2371

e-mail: Narismulug@ukzn.ac.za

You may retain this Information Sheet.

**INFORMED CONSENT: NOVICE TEACHERS**

I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study: Enabling student teachers of literature to become agents of change. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study and consent to take part in the study.

I consent to participate in the following research activity: Interview

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF TEACHER

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE: Practicing Teachers**

**Please answer the following questions.**

1. Please tick the answer that applies to you. Are you:

Female
Male

2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your idea of an **effective** teacher of literature?


4. What is your idea of an **ineffective** teacher of literature?


5. Do you believe that teachers of literature are **able** to equip learners to grow and develop through the study of literature in their school classrooms?

Yes
No

6. Did **your** lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature?

Yes
No

6.1. If Yes, say how they equipped you to become effective teachers of literature?

6.2. If No, say why you think this is so.


7. Do you believe that lecturers of literature are **able** to equip student teachers to effect changes in their learners and help their school learners grow?

Yes
No

8. Did **your** lecturers of literature equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your school learners grow?

Yes
No

8.1. If Yes, say how they equipped you to help your school learners grow?

8.2. If No, say why you think this is so.


9. Teachers can serve as agents of change in the school classroom. What do you understand 'agents of change' to mean?


10. Do you believe that **you** are an agent of change in your school classroom?

Yes
No

11. Do you believe that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change in the school classroom?

Yes
No

12. Is there a teacher at your school that you consider an agent of change?

Yes
No

12.1. If Yes, say what makes you consider the person to be an agent of change.

12.2. If No, say why you think this is so.


*Thank you for your time and input. It is sincerely appreciated.*

**APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENT TEACHERS**

**Please answer the following questions.**

**SECTION A:**

1. Please tick the answer that applies to you. Are you:

Female
Male

2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of the High/ Secondary School that you attended:

---

4. Where is the school located?

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5. Were your parents or guardians readers?

YES NO (Circle the appropriate answer)

6. Did your parents or guardians read to you as a child?

YES NO (Circle the appropriate answer)

7. How would you rate your experiences in your literature class in high/ secondary school? (Place a cross (X) next to those statements that apply to you)

1	I was always involved in my literature class at school	
2	My teacher gave us chapter summaries	
3	My teacher encouraged us to challenge assumptions	
4	Different learners took turns reading aloud in class	
5	We were given questions to answer based on the text	
6	I had boring teachers of literature.	
7	Issues of race, class, gender and identity were highlighted in lessons	
8	My teachers used innovative methods to teach literature	
9	My teachers were well prepared for literature lessons	
10	I loved literature lessons	
11	I hated literature lessons	
12	I have a teacher from high/ secondary school that I will use as a role model when I teach literature	

**SECTION B:**

8. What is your idea of an **effective** teacher of literature?


9. What is your idea of an **ineffective** teacher of literature?


10. Do you believe that teachers of literature are **able** to equip learners to grow and develop through the study of literature in their school classrooms?

Yes
No

11. Do **your** lecturers of literature equip you to become effective teachers of literature?

Yes
No

11.1. If Yes, say how they equip you to become effective teachers of literature?

11.2. If No, say why you think this is so.


12. Do you believe that lecturers of literature are **able** to equip students to effect changes in their learners and help their school learners grow?

Yes
No

13. Do **your** lecturers of literature equip you to effect changes in your learners and help your school learners grow?

Yes
No

13.1. If Yes, say how they equip you to help your school learners grow?

13.2. If No, say why you think this is so.


14. Teachers can serve as agents of change in the school classroom. What do you understand ‘agents of change’ to mean?


15. Do you believe that **you** will be an agent of change in your school classroom?

Yes
No

16. Do you believe that a teacher of literature can serve as an agent of change in the school classroom?

Yes
No

17. Do you **want** to make a difference to your learners’ lives?

Yes
No

17.1. If Yes, say how you will do this.

17.2. If No, explain why.


*Thank you for your time and input. It is sincerely appreciated.*

## **APPENDIX G: LECTURE ROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE:**

### **During Observation, ask myself the following questions:**

1. Do I understand who the participants are and the resources that they bring with them? How do I enable sharing of the resources and how do I affirm the resources that participants bring to the lecture room?
2. Do I have thorough knowledge of the text and the pedagogy used to teach the text? Do participants know the text? Do they understand the pedagogy?
3. What strategies do I employ to serve as an effective, engaged lecturer of literature? How do participants respond to the strategies?
4. Do I scaffold their learning? Is it effective?
5. How do I facilitate participants becoming effective, engaged teachers of literature?
6. How do I establish enjoyment in reading, listening, speaking, writing and engagement in the lecture-room?
7. Do I treat English literature as a resource that can lead to empowerment?
8. What strategies do I employ to help participants use literature to grow intellectually and socially?
9. How do I facilitate participants empowering themselves as potential agents of change?
10. What do I do to show participants how to be agents of change?
11. How do I enable the practical transference of the strategies to participants' classrooms?
12. Focus on: Relationships of participants in the lecture room/ interactions/ involvement in co-operative learning activities/ independence/ agency/ voice/

## **APPENDIX H: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE: TEACHING PRACTICE**

### **During Observation, ask the following questions:**

- What strategies does the student teacher of literature employ to serve as an effective, engaged teacher of literature?
- What strategies does a student teacher of literature employ to help learners develop academically and socially?
- What does a student teacher of literature do to represent herself/ himself as an agent of change?

## **APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What strategies can be used to prepare student teachers to become effective, engaged teachers of literature?
2. How can student teachers use literature to help their learners develop academically and socially?
3. How can student teachers become agents of academic and social change?
4. How did you react to the interventions introduced in the lecture room?
5. Did the interventions introduced in class have any effect on your notions of a good teacher?
6. Will you try the intervention/s in your classroom?
7. Do you see yourself as potential agents of change in your classroom?
8. How would you describe your role as an agent of change?
9. Has the study had any effect on you?

The questions will be expanded upon as the focus group progresses.

**APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: STUDENT TEACHER PARTICIPANTS**

1. What strategies can be used to prepare student teachers to become effective, engaged teachers of literature?
2. How can student teachers use literature to help their learners develop academically and socially?
3. How can student teachers become agents of academic and social change?
4. How did you react to the interventions introduced in the lecture room?
5. Did the interventions introduced in class have any effect on your notions of a good teacher?
6. Will you try the intervention/s in your classroom?
7. Do you see yourself as potential agents of change in your classroom?
8. How would you describe your role as an agent of change?
9. Has the study had any effect on you?

The questions will be expanded upon as the interview progresses.

**APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: NOVICE TEACHERS**

1. What strategies, if any, used in English Education lecture rooms, helped to prepare you to become effective, engaged teachers of literature?
2. What does it mean to teach literature to students?
3. How do teachers at your school teach literature? Do you teach it any differently?
4. How do teachers of literature become better teachers of literature?
5. Do you use literature to help your learners develop academically and socially?
6. How do you help your learners grow?
7. Do you use literature to effect academic and social change? If so, how?
8. Are you an agent of academic and social change? How can teachers of literature serve as agents of change in the school classroom?
9. What aspects, not covered in English Education lectures, need to be included in modules to enable teachers to become agents of change in their classrooms?
10. Do you believe that the study had any impact on you as a teacher?

**APPENDIX L: INTERPRETING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

**1. Describe the kind of teacher depicted in each picture (A) – (G)**



(A)



u27292851 fotosearch.com

(B)



(C)



(D)



(E)



(F)



(G)

2.1. Which type of teacher (A) – (G) is the most realistic depiction of South African teachers?

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2.2. Which type of teacher (A) – (G) would you most like to be? Why?

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## **APPENDIX M: PRESENTING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

1.1. Please present in visual form your idea of what an ideal teacher of literature looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability). Work on the separate sheet attached.

1.2. Briefly explain your visual image.

**APPENDIX N: Questionnaire: Film Study**

Please answer the following questions based on your experiences of films and film study.

1. Please tick the answer that applies to you.

I enjoy watching films
I am not keen on watching films
I do not get an opportunity to watch films often
I do not watch films

2. Where do you watch films? You may tick as many as apply to you.

At home on television
At home watching DVDs
At the movies
On the computer
On YouTube
Any other (please specify)

3. Is there anything you do not like when watching films?

_____
_____
_____

4. At school, did you watch films as part of your English classes?

Yes
No

5. At school, did you watch films as part of any other subject?

Yes (Please indicate which subject)
No

6. At school, did you watch films as a treat or to keep you occupied?

Yes
No

7. What types of films do you enjoy? You may tick as many as apply to you.

Romance
Comedy
Drama
Historical
Thriller

Political drama
Epics
Other (please specify)

8. At school, were you ever taught how to read a film?

Yes
No

9. What would you like to get out of your film study course in your English Education Major module at university?

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10. What types of films would you like us to study?

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11. What types of films do you consider suitable to teach at school?

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**Thank you for your input. It is sincerely appreciated.**

**APPENDIX O: STUDENT EVALUATION**

**MODULE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LECTURER’S NAME:** Ansurie Pillay

Please respond to each statement below by indicating the extent to which you **Agree** or **Disagree** with it. Please insert the letters **A, B, C, D, or E** next to each statement.

**A = Strongly Agree**

**B = Agree**

**C = Neutral response/ Not sure/ Don’t know**

**D = Disagree**

**E = Strongly Disagree**

1. The lecturer was well prepared.	
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	

12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	
14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	

**Thank you for your input. It is sincerely appreciated.**

**APPENDIX P: FINAL STUDENT EVALUATION**

**MODULE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LECTURER’S NAME:** Ansurie Pillay

Please respond to each statement below by indicating the extent to which you **Agree** or **Disagree** with it. Please insert the letters **A, B, C, D, or E** next to each statement.

**A = Strongly Agree**

**B = Agree**

**C = Neutral response/ Not sure/ Don’t know**

**D = Disagree**

**E = Strongly Disagree**

1. The lecturer was well prepared.	
2. The lectures were clear and well-delivered.	
3. I understood the language used by the lecturer.	
4. The lecturer presented the lectures in an interesting way and stimulated my enthusiasm for the subject.	
5. The teaching strategies used helped me understand the text.	
6. I know how to implement these teaching strategies in a classroom.	
7. The lecturer asked questions and promoted discussion.	
8. I felt comfortable to participate in class.	
9. The lecturer had a good relationship with the class.	
10. Important issues were raised through the study of this text.	
11. Writing tasks in pairs and groups were useful to my thinking.	
12. The lectures showed me that I can make my learners grow.	
13. The lectures made me think about myself as a teacher in the classroom.	

14. The lectures made me think about myself as a potential change agent in the classroom.	
15. I enjoyed the lectures.	

Please answer the following questions by ticking either **YES** or **NO**

	YES	NO
16. In your opinion, do teachers need to be agents of change in their classrooms?		
17. Will YOU be an agent of change in your classroom?		
18. Will YOU be an effective teacher of literature?		

Any other comments?

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**Please turn over**

**To my dear students**

**Thank you for your participation in this study. It is sincerely appreciated.**

**Your engagement and enthusiasm to embrace change are highly commendable. I hope the study has made a difference to your lives, both personally and professionally.**

**I wish you all the best in the next chapter of your lives. I have every confidence that you will serve your learners well and make a difference to their lives.**

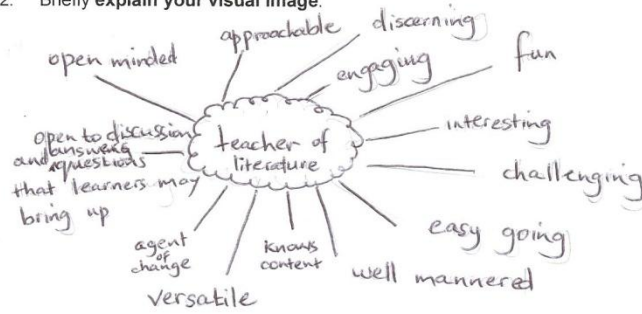
**Kind regards**

**Ansurie**

**APPENDIX Q: EXAMPLES OF VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)

2. Briefly explain your visual image.



I feel that these are just some of the factors that make up a good English teacher. They encourage learners to ask questions and put forth opinions because this the teacher seems approachable and easy to talk to.  
~~the teacher~~

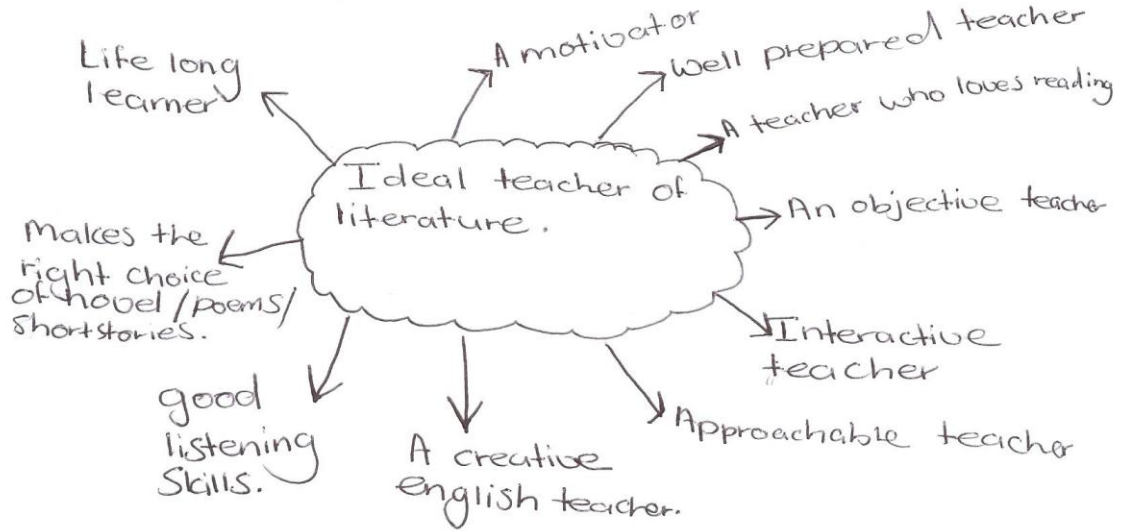
1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image.**

Words that I believe best describe the ideal teacher of literature.

Someone who engages with <sup>learners</sup> students and makes literature lessons fun and out of the box.

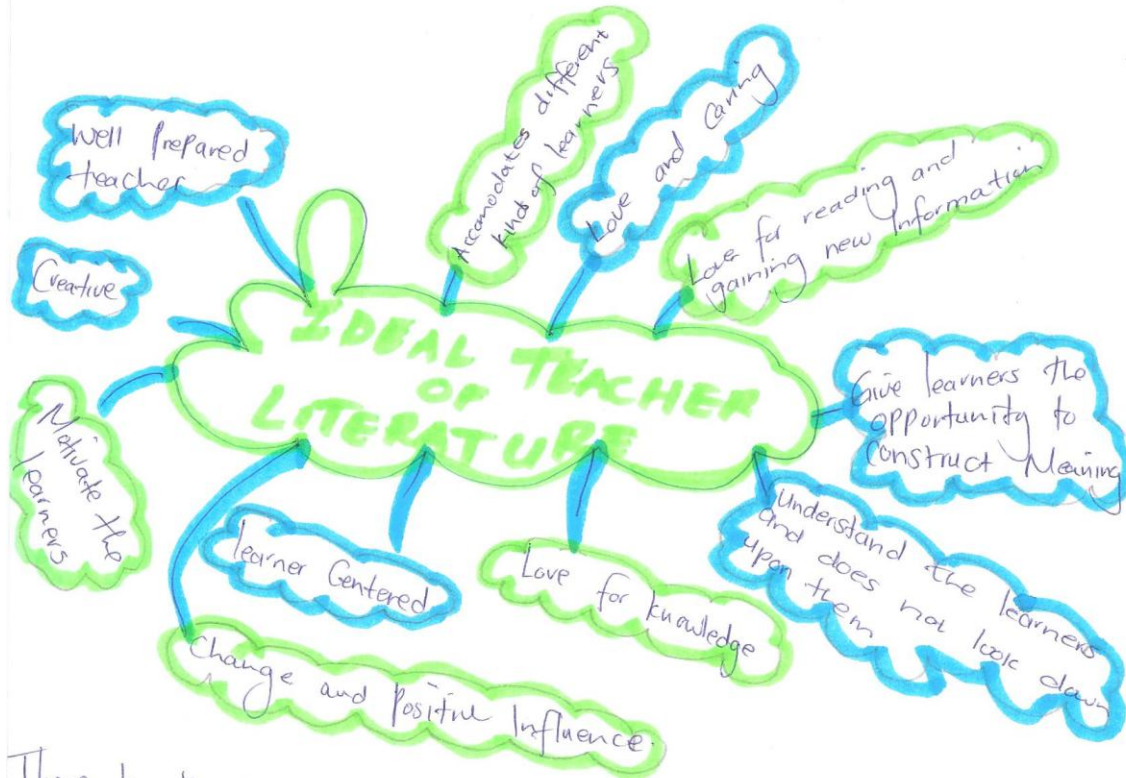


1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image**.



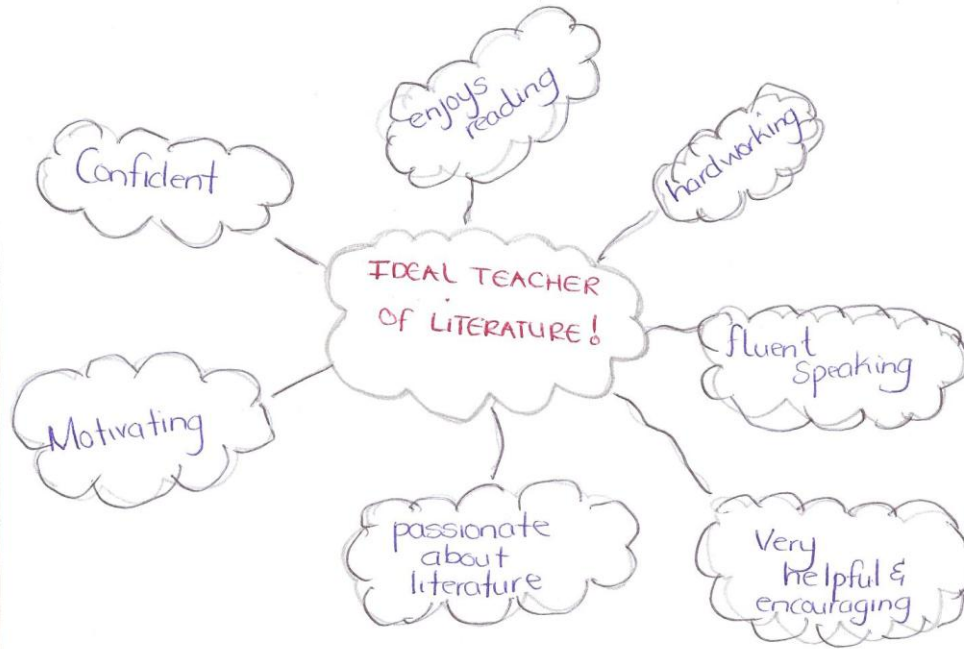
2. The visual image is a mind map of characteristics a literature teacher should have. The mind map has methods and ideas which should be applied in an English literature classroom.

1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your **IDEA**, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image**.



There is no-one who is perfect, but we are all trying. A good teacher will be patient and understanding, well prepared and is ready to face challenges in the classroom or outside the classroom. A teacher that teach with passion.

1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image**.



2) My visual image is a representation of the characteristics a ideal teacher of literature should possess.  
This is my own opinion

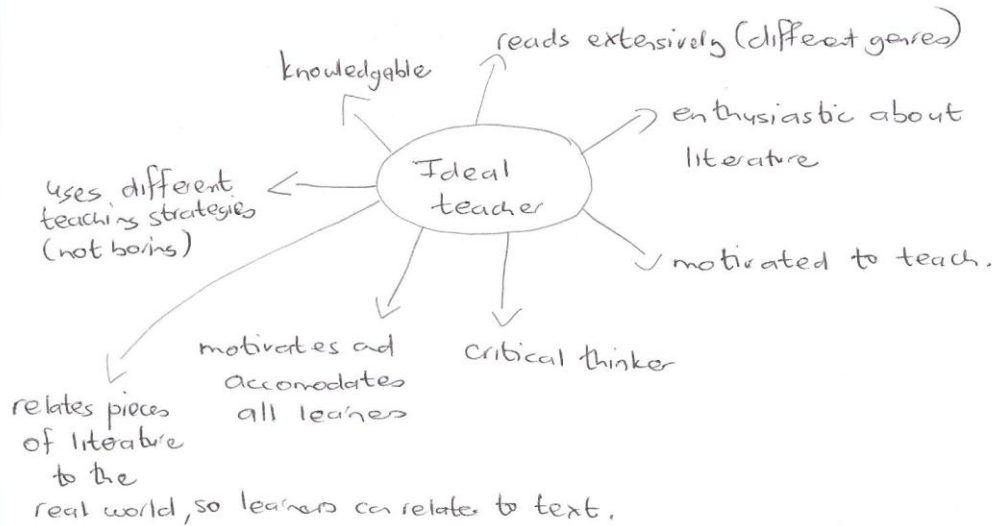
1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image**.



It is a basic view of the qualities and behavior an ideal teacher of literature has.

1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image.**

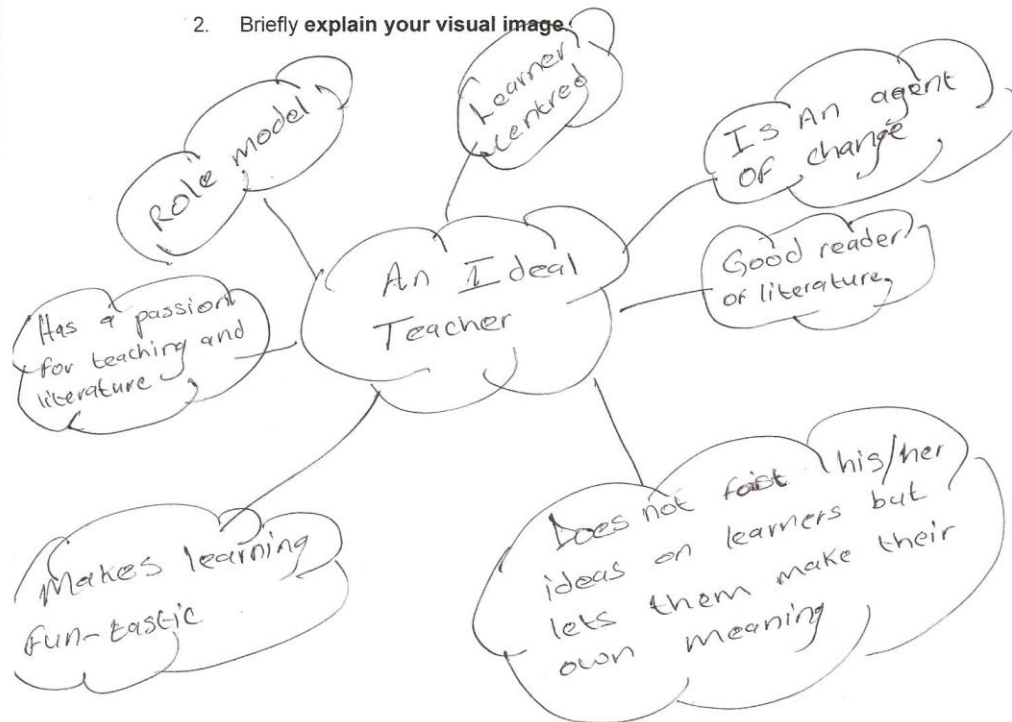
1) An ideal teacher of literature.



2) My Mind map depicts the characteristics that I think an ideal teacher of literature should have.

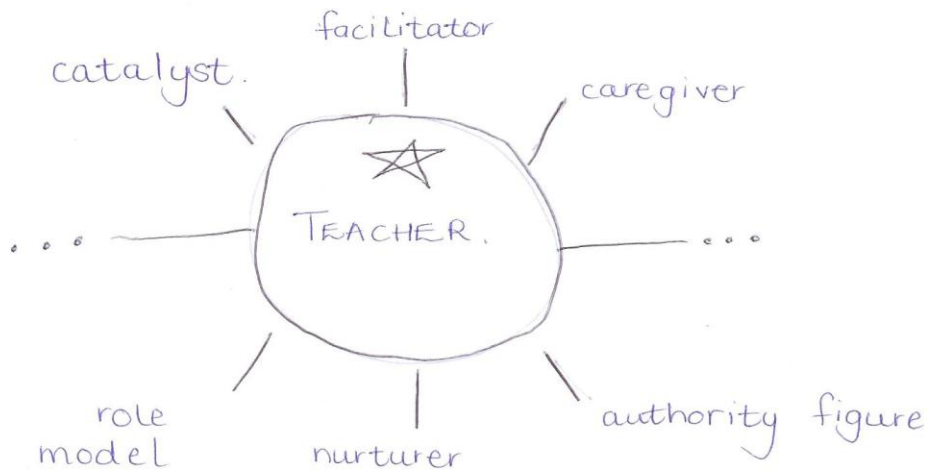
A teacher of literature should read widely in order to be highly knowledgeable and impart this knowledge to learners. A teacher should always be enthusiastic about literature and motivated to teach at all times. A good teacher will use different teaching strategies to accomodate learners interests and always relate the themes of the literature to the real world, so learners can relate to it.

1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image**.



- Basically an ideal teacher of literature is a teacher who knows what he/she is doing and is able to achieve it by making learning interesting and fun. A teacher who loves reading and has a passion for teaching and making a difference in the learners lives to be better leader, teachers, doctors and lawyers of tomorrow.

1. Present in **visual form** your idea of what an **ideal teacher of literature** looks like. You may present a picture, diagram, sketch, drawing or mind map or you may use words or anything else to depict your idea. (I am looking for your IDEA, not artistic ability)
2. Briefly **explain your visual image**.



The ideal teacher is not just one dimension but has different facets that are suitable and applicable.