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Grade 11 Learners' Engagement with Issues of Power in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

A dissertation submitted to the School of Education
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in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education by Research

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

I, Jesse Junai Pillay (student number: 214554283), declare that:

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my younger self,
for working tirelessly through all the hardships and remaining optimistic.
For not giving up even when it was hard not to…

And to all the learners I have the privilege to teach and learn from.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I express immeasurable gratitude to my supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay, for her unwavering support and guidance throughout my transformative journey as a researcher, teacher, and individual.
- I deeply appreciate and respect the learners who took part in this study and shared their experiences with me; without their involvement, completing this research endeavour would not have been possible.
- I extend my thanks to William Shakespeare for writing the play, *Macbeth*.

ABSTRACT

In South African schools, there is a need for discussions on how to integrate literacy meaningfully into learners' lives. This integration could foster critical thinking and address issues of social justice. Despite a democratic dispensation in South Africa, the problems of oppression persist in various forms. In this dissertation, I argue that the English Home Language classroom has the potential to be a cornerstone for social transformation. Drawing on data from 55 Grade 11 English Home Language learners in a public high school in Verulam (Durban), this interpretive, qualitative study sought to understand their recognition and understanding of issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*. Additionally, it sought to explore how learners connected issues of power in the play to those in their own lives. The study delved into how events and characters in the play contributed to the construction of learners' beliefs about power. A phenomenological research design, underpinned by a theoretical framework of two theories – critical pedagogy and critical literature pedagogy – provided the foundation for this study and facilitated the exploration and understanding of the lived experiences of learners studying this play. Utilising thematic analysis to analyse the data, generated from an open-ended questionnaire, a visual task, and semi-structured interviews, the findings indicate that the teaching of the play, *Macbeth*, within a critical framework, may be used as a catalyst to raise learners' awareness of issues of power in their lives. The findings also showed that by working beyond the traditional methods of teaching the play and using aspects of critical reading, learners seized knowledge with enthusiasm and critically reflected on issues of power in their lives, despite facing language barriers when reading Shakespeare's text. Notably, the learners were able to draw on their experiences through critically engaging with the play to construct their beliefs about power in various ways. Overall, the data indicated learners' increased awareness of issues of power and the emergence of a nascent sense of agency. This newfound agency suggests the potential initiation of a process aimed at addressing issues of power in their lives, communities, and the broader world.

Keywords: Power, Social Justice, Critical Pedagogy, Critical Literature Pedagogy, English Home Language, Shakespeare, Play, *Macbeth*, Grade 11

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CAPS	Curriculum of Assessment and Policy Statement
CLP	Critical Literature Pedagogy
CoC	Code of Conduct
COVID-19	Corona Virus
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ESL	English Second Language
FET	Further Education and Training
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
RQ	Research Question
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

It is crucial for teachers of English, and other stakeholders, to engage in meaningful discussions on the positioning of literacy in the lives of learners to facilitate critical thinking and critical engagement. Such engagements are necessary for effectuating the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement's (CAPS) directives for teaching literature in the South African EnglishHome Language classroom (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011).

Traditionally, high school English teachers have typically held the belief that literature education is characterised by a rigid set of self-contained, transferrable skills, competencies, and outcomes (Simpson & Cremin, 2022). In this dissertation, I posit that the English Home Language classroom, particularly in the context of teaching literary texts, holds the potential to play a pivotal role in the lives of learners by focussing on, inter alia, the influence of representations in texts, especially in relation to constructing and maintaining oppressive ideologies that learners may later adopt in society. I contend that the English Home Language classroom is ideally positioned to scrutinise and challenge these representations, thereby fostering critical engagement and critical thinking.

In South Africa, as well as in other contexts, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the prevailing inequalities in a society steeped in the post-apartheid promise of social justice and transformation. Teachers of English, therefore, bear the ethical responsibility of confronting these social injustices through their teaching and must be vigilant in avoiding any actions that might exacerbate the social, economic, and political challenges faced by learners due to the circumstances that surround them.

To engage with issues of power in the social and political spheres in learners' lives, this dissertation seeks to foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, as a catalyst for learners in two Grade 11 English Home Language classes. A critical framework plays an important role in the teaching of prescribed literary texts like *Macbeth*, which attempts not only to facilitate the opportunity for learners to challenge deeply ingrained ideologies and representations within the text but also to elevate their awareness and agency, initiating a transformative process concerning issues of power in their lives.

This chapter is structured as follows: It begins by outlining the rationale and purpose of the study, setting the stage for the research. Following this, it establishes the background and context of the study, providing essential contextual information. An overview of key studies and relevant literature that have influenced the research is then presented. The chapterproceeds to discuss the research objectives and questions that have guided this study, clarifyingits specific focus. It summarises the research process and methodology used. Additionally, theresearcher's stance on the subject matter is outlined. The chapter also addresses the delimitations of the study, defining what it encompasses and what falls outside its scope. Finally, it provides an overview of the organisation and structure of the entire dissertation, offering a clear roadmap for the reader to navigate the upcoming content.

1.2 Rationale

Over the past seven years, while teaching Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*, to Grade 11 English Home Language learners, I have consistently harboured a strong desire to depart from the traditional teaching methods I observed during my teaching practice as a pre-service teacher and from my colleagues' approaches once I began my teaching career. I came to recognise that my teaching approach to literature had largely been moulded by the practices I had witnessed in other educators' classrooms, leading me to believe that their methods were the correct ones.

Over the years, both I and my colleagues have voiced concerns and faced challenges related to our teaching of Shakespeare's plays. These issues have included insufficient time to complete the 'reading' of the play, poor learner participation in engaging with the play, the inaccessible language of Shakespeare's works, and the difficulty learners encounter in relating the text to their contemporary lives in the twenty-first century, among an array of other complaints. Even though we were aware of the multitude of issues linked to teaching Shakespeare's plays and the threat of standardised outcomes, teachers, myself included, resorted to the conventional 'banking model of education' (Thompson & Turchi, 2016). At that time, I did not think to confront my practice and the role it played in the challenges teachers and learners experienced. However, my mounting frustration propelled me to explore more meaningful ways of teaching Shakespeare that would enable learners to seize knowledge with excitement and relate to it in meaningful ways.

In my professional capacity, I am acutely aware that a significant portion of the learners at the public high school where I teach come from informal settlements, which grapple with various socio-economic challenges, including poverty and crime. It was evident to me that the

play, *Macbeth*, had the potential to act as a catalyst for heightening their awareness of social justice issues that directly affect their daily lives. My aspiration was to empower them with the agency to contemplate potential avenues for transforming not only their own lives but also their communities and beyond.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how the play, *Macbeth*, could be taught as a catalyst for learners to critically reflect on issues of power in their lived experiences. By concentrating on the play, learners were empowered to scrutinise its representations and address relevant concerns. Furthermore, the study aimed to underscore that if learners went through their educational journeys without grappling with various social justice issues in their lives, including the dynamics of power, they might graduate as citizens who lack the capacity for critical thinking. Using literature in an English classroom offered a valuable opportunity to start the process. Consequently, the study focused on engaging learners in discussions related to power dynamics within the English classroom, using the text, *Macbeth*, as a focal point for these discussions.

1.4 Background and Context

1.4.1 Background

This study considers learners' engagements with issues of power through the prescribed literature text, *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare (2015). In terms of the curriculum, the play has been prescribed by the South African DBE (DBE, n.d.), for the Grade 11, English Home Language learner. The CAPS (DBE, 2011, p. 9) stipulates that learning a language in the Further Education and Training phase should enable learners to "challenge the perspectives, values and power relations embedded in texts". As such, literature in the English Home Language classroom is positioned to "equip learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability, for meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country" (DBE, 2011, p. 4). Hence, the study of literature equips learners to engage in substantive discussions with the goal of fostering individuals who make positive contributions to society. This is reinforced in the CAPS document which states that literature studies require "honest interpretations and comments from the learners themselves" (DBE, 2011, p. 12).

While it is essential to encourage learners to provide “honest interpretations and comments” (DBE, 2011, p. 12), it is equally important to recognise that they exist within particular communities in a specific country. South Africa is widely recognised as one of the most unequal nations globally, where destitution, hunger, and overcrowding coexist alongside affluence (Woolard, 2002). The colonial and apartheid policies of the past have unmistakably shaped a profoundly unequal society, and as noted by Forde et al. (2021), the lack of equitable resource distribution persists. According to Gradin et al. (2021), a child born to parents in one of South Africa’s most impoverished households faces a 95% likelihood of remaining in poverty as an adult, thus perpetuating the same economic circumstances. Although economic emancipation is a key goal for a democracy such as South Africa, many individuals find it challenging to break free from structures that sustain oppression.

In the wider African context, Gradin (2014) attributes the inadequate state of education to the political landscape that governs our lives. They contend that governments recognise the flexibility of education, which can be utilised to improve reading skills or impedeindividuals' advancement in participating in the higher echelons of the economy, thereby perpetuating poverty. Focusing on South Africa in particular, Valodia (2021) notes that inequality in South Africa is about more than what people earn or the distribution of resources.Ultimately, it is about power and power dynamics, whether based on race, gender, economic resources, age, or sexual preferences. This is despite the Bill of Rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (RSA, 1996a) which upholds and safeguards the rights to dignity, equality, and freedom for all individuals, regardless of factorssuch as race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth.

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy (DBE, 2011, p. 5) states that it aims to effectuate the Constitution (RSA, 1996a) to create a society that is grounded in the ideologies of social justice while being "sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability, and other factors”. The English Home Language classroom is well-suited to serve as a space to explore social justice issues, including the dynamics of power in human social relations through literature. The play under discussion, *Macbeth*, encompasses notions of power.

Macbeth, a courageous Scottish general, succumbs to a relentless hunger for power, driven by his ambitious aspirations for political ascent. This thirst for power is further fuelled by the persuasive influence of his ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, and the prophecies foretold

by the three witches. These prophecies serve as harbingers of his anticipated success, setting him on a path of self-destruction. Macbeth does not only represent the power that comes from his capacity for extreme brutality, corruption, and control, but he also represents how different characters exercise power over him. The brief outline of the play expressed above demonstrates a plethora of power dynamics which may be compared to both the interpersonal and socio-political domains in people's lives, including the Grade 11 learners who are studying the play. Consequently, engaging in meaningful discussions about power has the potential to have a positive impact on society, particularly among the youth participants of this study.

1.4.2 Context

This study was conducted with learners at a high school located in the Verulam area. Verulam was previously designated as a residential area for people of Indian descent. As noted by Greene (2010, p. 27), the Group Areas Act "forced many South Africans out of their homes, mandating they live in specific government-designated racial enclaves". According to the 2022 Census data, Verulam covers an approximate area of 18,13 km^2 with a population of 37,273 people living in 10,896 households. The population is evenly divided between males and females (50% females and 50% males), with a significant portion falling within the 15 to 29-year-old age category. While Verulam was historically inhabited by people of Indian descent, there has been an increase in the Black African population, constituting 34% of the population, whereas Indians now make up 59%. The remaining 7% of the population includes individuals of other racial backgrounds. In terms of language spoken, 62% are English, 25% isiZulu, 5% isiXhosa, and 8% speak other languages.

Within the described geographical area lies the focus of this study: a public high school under the jurisdiction of the Pinetown district. This research spanned a two-year period. The school in question is a quintile level 4 institution and charges a school fee. South African schools are categorised according to the poverty levels of the community around the school and the infrastructure both within and around the school. Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 are no-fee paying schools, and quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying schools. In this fee-paying school, the majority of learners originate from economically disadvantaged areas on the outskirts of Verulam, resulting in a situation where most learners do not pay school fees.

Consequently, the educational institution depends on government concessions obtained through learner school fee exemption applications to finance its operations. Additionally, it organises fundraising initiatives to cover ongoing expenses and maintenance. Many of the

learners are under the care of guardians or relatives, and some reside in child-headed households. They are therefore unable to pay school fees.

The public high school presently enrols 1,328 learners and is served by a teaching staff consisting of 40 teachers. The school's Code of Conduct (CoC) states that the school does not condone any form of discrimination that undermines the confidence of learners and respects the responsibility assigned to him/her in ensuring the smooth running of the educational institution. This aligns with the mission and vision statement of the school, which underscores the significance of fostering a nurturing environment that is fundamental to promoting equality, growth, and enlightenment. Nevertheless, challenges such as bullying, insubordination, drug usage, and violence do arise, necessitating the daily implementation of numerous disciplinary procedures.

1.5 Overview of Key Studies Dealing with the Topic

While this study draws on various research studies, the following were found to be key in shaping this study. The study considered several theoretical studies that explored the conceptualisation of "power" as a phenomenon. Although numerous definitions of the term "power" have been proposed, this dissertation will adopt the definition put forth by Dahl (1957) and Lukes (1986). They view power as ubiquitous and not limited to dealing with one's ability to get another person to do something he/she would not do otherwise. It therefore guides this study to consider people's capacity to produce power. Theoretical studies by South African scholars, such as Zaaiman (2020) and Nye (2020), are key in establishing the notion that power is a possession based on sources such as race, gender, status, and wealth, among other social and political sources. These studies explored social structures, norms, and control, and were instrumental in this study's exploration of learners' experiences of power.

The Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, is used as a catalyst for learners to engage with issues of power in their English Home Language classes. A literary study conducted by Mohammed et al. (2020), which sought to analyse issues of power in the play, is essential for understanding how characters and events are represented and for enhancing learners' awareness and understanding. Other literary studies of the play, such as those by Ferdous (2017) and Nabhan (2020), delved into core themes in the play, including ambition, manipulation, control, and gender, among various other aspects that learners could have recognised. Using Hayat et al. (2021) ideas on the psychological analysis of characters like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth,

this dissertation sets up an analysis of learners' engagements with issues of power in the domain of interpersonal human relations.

The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study are critical pedagogy and critical literature pedagogy. For the present study, *critical pedagogy* is defined as a critical approach to education that highlights the importance of having learners engage actively in their learning process and being able to find and develop their own opinions and positions (Freire, 1970). Thus, Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy enables this study to attempt to intersect education with society so that learners think critically about power relations and dominant ideologies in the hope that they transform their lives. Giroux (2009) builds on the idea of transforming lifeless classroom practices to become fruitful dialogical spaces that are culturally relevant, socially driven, and empowering. The English Home Language classroom should be seen as a dialogical space that challenges the dominant narratives and ideologies in society as posited by McLaren (2016).

In addition, *critical literature pedagogy* (CLP) aims to facilitate learners to understand and critique texts like *Macbeth* (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). Mellor and Patterson (2000) highlight the importance of learners critically examining the values that a text may uphold, confirm, or challenge, and encouraging an exploration of the diverse interpretations and meanings within the text. This dissertation will use the terms "reading *with*" and "reading *against*" the play in accordance with the guiding principles of critical literature pedagogy. Consequently, the application of both critical pedagogy and CLP in the teaching of plays, such as *Macbeth,* forms the core focus of literature pedagogy in the English Home Language setting.

While these studies are explored in detail in the literature review and theoretical framework, the studies are mentioned at this point to contextualise the research related to the topic of this dissertation.

1.6 Research Objectives and Questions

This section presents the research objectives and questions that guided this study.

1.6.1 Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore how learners in two Grade 11 classes recognise and understand issues of power in the play, *Macbeth.*

2. Understand how learners in two Grade 11 classes relate to issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, to issues of power in their lives.
3. Explore how events and characters in the play, *Macbeth*, help to construct learners' beliefs about power.

1.6.2 Research questions (RQs)

RQ 1: How do learners in two Grade 11 classes recognise and understand issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*?

RQ 2: How do learners in two Grade 11 classes relate issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, to issues of power in their lives?

RQ 3: How do events and characters in the play, *Macbeth*, help construct Grade 11 learners' beliefs about power?

1.7 Overview of the Research Process

This study was grounded in the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy and CLP that sought to use the play, *Macbeth*, as a catalyst to explore learners' lived experiences of issues of power. In so doing, an interpretative paradigm together with a qualitative approach was applied. For this study, I maintained the notion that reality is subjectively lived and experienced by applying a phenomenological design allowing learners to share their ideas within their context and in their own words.

This study incorporated a purposive sample comprising 55 Grade 11 English Home Language learners from a school located in Verulam, within the Pinetown district of education. This study used an open-ended questionnaire (See Appendix D), visual task (See Appendix E), and semi-structured interviews (See Appendix F) to generate data. Thematic analysis was used for data analysis.

It was important to ensure that correct ethical procedures were followed. Before the generation of data, gatekeeper permission was obtained from the principal of the secondary school. On completion of the gatekeeper's permission document, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) School of Education's Research Ethics Committee (protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004479/2022) (See Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter).

Subsequently, informed consent documents (see Appendix B: Informed Consent Document) were provided to the parents or guardians of learners under the age of 18 years. This allowed the parents or guardians to fully understand their role in the study. Informed assent documents were also distributed to the learners themselves (see Appendix C: Informed Assent Document).

Further elaboration on these procedures will be presented in the methodology chapter.

1.8 Researcher's Stance

A researcher is required to set aside their perceptions and biases to ensure objectivity when conducting research. For the present study, I chose to use the first-person pronoun (I). While I aimed to be unbiased and objective in the conducting of the study, I also remained a teacher who teaches Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*, to Grade 11 learners. In using the first-person pronoun, I cement the close relation that this study has on my development as a practising teacher of English as a Home Language to English Second Language (ESL) learners. I believe that I have become a teacher who promotes the teaching of literature in a way that fosters critical thinking which subsequently enhances learners' acquisition of the English language. In this study, my intention was for the learners to be regarded as equals, not led by me, but rather to be active participants in the research process. This approach was designed to elicit genuine and unfiltered responses from them. Recognising my role in the research process, particularly in the teaching of the play, *Macbeth*, more accurately describes this research effort.

I firmly believe that power dynamics are omnipresent in all aspects of our lives, manifesting in various levels and forms. I have consistently been an attentive observer of power dynamics in social interactions within my workplace and community. Certain interactions in these contexts have led me to question the prevailing societal structure and how individuals readily adopt and perpetuate dominant social behaviours to gain access to power for diverse objectives. Drawing from these experiences, it became apparent that an individual's power can be gauged by the extent of social control they possess. The more control one exercises over others or a group of individuals, the more powerful they become. Consequently, it became imperative for my classroom to evolve into a space where learners engage in critical reflection and actively challenge power dynamics.

Since completing my university education, I have been working as a teacher at the public high school where this study was conducted. Throughout the years, I have come to realise that effective teaching cannot occur without the establishment of a strong and

meaningful connection with the learners. With each cohort of learners that entered my classroom came their similar experiences of physical abuse, substance abuse, and emotional trauma, among other issues. Most startling was my observation of their low self-esteem, especially during field trips, school tournaments, and workshops where they interacted with learners from other schools. Consequently, their school environment often served as a sanctuary where they felt comfortable, but it was also a setting where disciplinary issues frequently emerged, as was the case with the learners in this study. I had the opportunity to teach these learners in their previous year (Grade 10), and I was well-acquainted with their backgrounds. This familiarity piqued my curiosity and motivated me to delve into how they would engage with power dynamics through the teaching of *Macbeth*.

1.9 Delimitations

A study of this nature takes into consideration several aspects for inclusion in the body of work presented but there are elements that I did not consider.

Firstly, I included two Grade 11 English Home Language classes and did not consider the other five classes of the school or the Grade 11 learners from other schools. I felt comfortable with a sample size of 55 which proved to be manageable in the data generation and analysis stage of the study. Furthermore, I did not include learners who previously studied Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, namely Grade 12 learners, as it was important to include the learners who were studying the play at that time and would give their initial impressions and reflections of the play and the violence within it.

Secondly, I sought to apply CLP to one Shakespearean text. I did not draw on the Grade 11 learners' engagement with other texts written by Shakespeare, especially those which were taught and discussed in other grades. These discussions may have had an influence on the way in which the learners read *with* and *against* the context of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Focus was maintained on the context of the play, *Macbeth*, as it was the prescribed text.

Lastly, this study chose to use three data generation methods only. While classroom observations of learners' participation or group discussions could have been employed as data generation methods, I weighed the possibility that such data generation methods could have led to learners being uncomfortable and possibly 'staging' their participation and responses because of the presence of their peers. Ultimately, I needed to focus on learners' personal lived experiences of issues of power as authentically articulated as possible.

1.10 Layout of the Chapters

This dissertation has been divided into eight chapters.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study's background and context. It outlines the rationale, purpose, key studies, research objectives and questions, the researcher's perspective, and the delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to explore existing literature concerning the conceptualisation of power as a social and political phenomenon. Furthermore, it seeks to build upon the prior research conducted by scholars in the field, particularly those who have examined fictional representations of power in literature and those who have tackled issues of social justice within the context of the English classroom.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework that guided the study.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 explores the methodology employed to conduct the study. Attention is given to the paradigm, approach, design, and selected sample. The three instruments used to generate the data are also discussed along with the method of data analysis.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 conducts a literary analysis of Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*, by focusing on issues of power represented in the text.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 outlines the findings of the data generated for this study as guided by the first two research questions and objectives.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 discusses the findings of the data generated for this study as guided by the third research question and objective.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 concludes the study by highlighting the main findings and focusing on their implications.

1.11 Conclusion

This introductory chapter has presented the study's topic and delved into the primary components of the research process. The focus will now transition to the next chapter, which explores the literature review of related research on the topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature related to the phenomenon of *power*. Special attention is given to learners' engagements with issues of power by using the play *Macbeth* as a catalyst to explore their lived experiences of power. Key issues of power that relate to the life of South African learners are highlighted by drawing on insights from local and international literature. I first sought to ground this study on defining power by exploring its conceptualisation. Thereafter, a thematic review of the literature is undertaken, focusing on core themes presented in the existing body of literature. The initial theme encompasses power in education, with further exploration through sub-themes such as state power in education, teacher power in education, and learner power in education. This examination is followed by an exploration of civic power, fictional representations of power in literature, including *Macbeth*, and a subsequent engagement with issues of social justice, including power in the English classroom. An overview of these key areas provides invaluable insights, enhancing comprehension of the complexities concerning issues of power and social justice both in the specified play and in the lives of learners under scrutiny in this study.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Exploring the conceptualisation of power

In light of the research questions that are being addressed in this study, it is important to endeavour towards a conceptual exploration of 'power' relating to human relations. In an early theoretical study, Dahl (1957) explicated that the social phenomenon of power is ubiquitous in nature, especially when considered in human interaction, and fundamentally deals with one's ability to get another person to do something he/she would not otherwise do. Dahl (1957, p. 201) further asserted that crafting a single, consistent, and coherent definition of power tailored to address specific research problems is improbable due to its expansive nature, which he aptly described as a "bottomless swamp", and the diverse manifestations of power as perceived by the "students of the subjects".

Similarly, Lukes (1986) states that power is a very broad category of human relations that cannot be confined to general definitions. However, unlike Dahl (1957), he adds that it goes beyond the production of effects over another person by considering the capacity to produce them. For instance, power as a human relationship can be exercised without deliberately seeking to do so or grasping its effects. In this regard, Lukes (1986) suggests that this could be the case through one's wealth, resources, strength, or personality, among others. Thus, power is associated with an agent's ability and capacity to get others to do something they would otherwise not do, which will also be the definition used in this study (Dahl, 1957; Lukes, 1986; Zaaiman, 2020).

Wilson (1976) also acknowledged the complexity of conceptualising the phenomenon of power. He observed that the term encompasses significant elements, reflecting the diverse usages of the word and the areas of agreement among its users. In his book titled *Power*, Scott (2018, p. 3) refers to the idea of *causal power,* emphasising its integral role in understanding human agency or the transformative capacity in which power is enacted between the "principal-agent" and the "subaltern" (p. 3). By "subaltern", Scott (2018) refers to a person whose choices are restricted and the greater this restriction, the greater the power of the principal agent.

The conceptualisation of power has been a subject of contention among social philosophers, giving rise to a diverse array of perspectives (Koning et al., 2011). For instance, drawing on Zaaiman's (2020) South African theoretical study of power, he explains why it is difficult to define power clearly. Firstly, it is challenging to provide a universally applicable meaning for a concept as intricate as power, given its inherent variations. Secondly, as Gallie (1956, cited in Zaaiman, 2020) noted, power is fundamentally a contested concept in the social sciences. Lastly, the process of defining power may have limitations, potentially constraining the conceptual power of definitions. This serves as the rationale for the adoption of the conceptualisation of power as associated with an agent's ability and capacity to get others to do something they would not otherwise do (Dahl, 1957; Lukes, 1986; Zaaiman, 2020). Furthermore, this broad conceptualisation aligns with recognition of the challenges inherent in attempting to encapsulate such a complex and multifaceted concept.

Michel Foucault, a French postmodernist, asserted that power is a complex social phenomenon characterised by numerous layers that collectively contribute to an individual's awareness of how much power they wield in society at large (as cited in Lee et al. 2016). Sharma's (2018) critical analysis of power relations in social life emphasises that these relations are influenced by diverse factors such as culture, place, and time. While Foucault

addresses power discourses in contemporary Western society, this study centres on power dynamics within contemporary South African society. Nevertheless, the factors of culture, place, and time are applicable across all contexts, albeit differing from typical Western ones. While many researchers of power appreciate and regard power as the capacity of an agent to impose his/her will over the defenceless, which deems power as a possession (Nye, 2020; Pansardi, 2021), Foucault (as cited in Sharma, 2018; Sumitro et al., 2020) believes that power is more a strategy than a possession. Thus, the purpose of the researcher is to explore power and how it functions in society in the everyday lives of people. Sharma (2018) further asserted that power is an inherent and essential feature of social life. Consequently, there is no society devoid of power, and as a corollary, no individual can exist outside the intricate web of power relations. An underlying thematic unity and continuity are discernible in Dowding's (2008) view, which suggests that humans live in a web of inherent social forces. In this framework, actors possess power over others to achieve strategic outcomes.

Bosch (2015) made a further attempt to elucidate the conceptualisation of power, contending that power is rooted in sources that can be material, social, or personal. According to Bosch (2015, p.2), the "power capacity" of an individual's ability to accomplish something is determined by the sources of power they possess. He adds that power structures may be stable as they are taken for granted due to people and structures internalising relationships, roles, rules, norms, traditions, habits, routines, action patterns, values, and symbols (Bosch, 2015). Moreover, power can be exercised in several ways, encompassing "social control", which includes force, coercion, manipulation, and the use of authority. When executed successfully, this exercise of power leads to obedience (Bosch, 2015, p. 7). With "legitimation", an attempt is made to persuade a subject that commands and obedience are rightful, thereby constituting systems of authority (Bosch, 2015, p. 7). Attempts to change a subject's perceptions, goals, preferences, beliefs, attitudes, cognitions, motives, and consequently, their behaviour are referred to as acts of "social influence" (Bosch, 2015, p. 7).

Galinsky et al. (2006), in their study conducted in America, employed an experimental method involving 57 undergraduates. The study consisted of two conditions: high-power and low-power individuals. They found that in both groups, power was defined as "controlling the ability of another person to get something he or she wanted or being in a position to evaluate someone else" (p. 1070). Furthermore, across all four experiments, high-power individuals were associated with a reduced tendency to comprehend how other individuals see the world, think about the world, and feel about the world (Galinsky et al., 2006). In a similar study,

Zerwas et al. (2022) conducted surveys among 1,286 people and discovered that individuals with higher levels of power are characterised by self-efficacy. They demonstrated the ability to control their emotions to make choices that benefit them. Whilst both studies used different methods to arrive at such findings, the conceptualisations of power are similar. Furthermore, Galinsky et al. (2006) expounded that power is connected to one's control over valued resources and transforms individual psychology. This empowerment leads to powerful individuals thinking and acting in ways that facilitate the retention and acquisition of power. Consequently, the outcomes of power may serve to further the interests of the powerful (Lukes, 1986).

In an experimental study involving 61 Dutch students, Lammers et al. (2010) conducted four experiments and discovered that individuals in positions of power were more inclined to impose stringent moral standards on others. Simultaneously, they tended to pass harsher judgements on others while exhibiting less stringent moral behaviour themselves. A consistent pattern of behaviour was observed among the powerless in each experiment, indicating a tendency towards hypocrisy. The presence of hypocrisy among both the powerful and the powerless can contribute to the perpetuation of social inequality (Lammers et al., 2010). In Kemper's (1991) study on power-status and emotion responses, an open-ended questionnaire was employed to investigate the emotional responses of 90 German citizens to their experiences over the past week. The findings revealed that emotions such as sadness and empathy, as opposed to joy/happiness, fear, and anger, were more challenging to detect in individuals in positions of power.

The aforementioned studies reveal significant trends that inform the current study, providing valuable insights into the framework of how learners conceptualise power. This enables me to make credible identifications of learners who perceive themselves as powerholders or powerless. This reiterates Lukes' (1986) argument that power can be exercised at times without a deliberate intention to do so or a full understanding of its effects.

Keltner et al.'s (1998) study, which investigated teasing in hierarchical relations, involved the recruitment of 24 low-status and 24 high-status American university students. Participants responded to open-ended questionnaires and participated in teasing sessions where they shared their experiences about being teased or being the teaser. Keltner et al. (1998) found that powerful individuals are more likely to display smiles of pleasure and show more variable behaviour and less normative behaviour. In addition, Guinote et al. (2002) stated that high-power individuals tend to speak longer about controversial issues than low-power individuals.

The characteristics stated above, according to Flynn et al. (2011), provide insight into recent research efforts by psychologists studying power to understand the following question: "What is it like to have power?" (p. 495).

As acknowledged above, power is a phenomenon mainly explored as a Euro-American concept qualitatively. Whilst this study also uses a qualitative approach, it focuses on a South African sample of Grade 11 learners who share their unique experiences of power in a post-colonial and post-apartheid era. In doing so, learners contribute their understandings and reflections of what power means to them which in turn contributes to the body of literature an understanding of what power means in a society formerly marginalised and oppressed. By using the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, as a catalyst to explore their engagement on issues of power, learners raise issues that strike at the heart of civic and social living.

2.2.2 Power in education

2.2.2.1 State power in education

South African education was previously characterised by segregation and racial inequality and thus had to be changed with the inception of democracy (Palmer & De Klerk, 2012). Embedded in Palmer and De Klerk's (2012) notion of the transitions in education, the nuance of power relations at play is crucially explored in this study to understand the trajectory and current state of education in a South African context. Fiske and Ladd (2004, p. 2) draw on the striking contrast between the powerful apartheid "repressive educational regime of Verwoed" who declared that native education should be "given" in a way that is devoid of expectations in life, and the "idealism of Mandela" for a new South Africa that would reinforce humanity's belief in justice that sustains hope for a glorious life for all. In both instances, the allusion that the idealistic construction of education lies in the power of the state, and its offerings to native individuals to carve out a prosperous identity during their educational journeys is seen nobler in the latter rather than the oppressive regime of apartheid.

Fiske and Ladd (2004, p. 3) also explain that education during the apartheid era was available to all, however, White people enjoyed "good education and a sense of control over individual and collective destinies", whereas Black people – a group that included Africans, Coloured individuals, and Indians – lived dehumanising lives that were restricted, which meant that education and vocational opportunities were severely circumscribed, and reminders of their relative powerlessness were ever-present.

In their book on South African liberation post-1994, Padayachee and Van Niekerk (2019) claim that the racially based education system in which apartheid was predicated denied the Black majority opportunities to participate in the upper strata of the economy. Consequently, post-1994 education policy is predicated on the principle of equality. However, "South African education generally fails to enhance freedom for all" (Seedat et al., 2009, p. 129). According to Jansen (2004), significant gains including new curricula, policy guidelines, improved access, accelerated provisioning of school infrastructure, and more equitable distribution of resources are documented commitments that signal profoundly democratic principles and practices in South African education. In this regard, Jansen (2004, p. 101) adds that "policy is not practice", and while an impressive construction of policies exists for democratic education, South Africa is far from achieving such ideals.

To expand on the above claim, Spaull (2015) claims that although racial segregation has been abolished for more than 20 years, schools that served predominantly White learners remain functional, while the vast majority of those which served Black learners remain dysfunctional and unable to impart the necessary numeracy and literacy skills to learners. Consequently, due to such entrenched inequality that current policy cannot seem to remediate, Spaull (2015, p. 34) goes on to assert that the poor quality of education that most learners receive in South Africa helps drive "intergenerational cycles of poverty" where learners inherit the social standing of their parents or caregivers, irrespective of their abilities. In other words, their poverty renders them less powerful.

In addition, Walker et al.'s (2019) study in Malawi found that secondary school teachers identified learners who score highly despite coming from poor backgrounds. The accessibility of higher education is often limited to wealthy families, thereby undermining social mobility and perpetuating segregation (Walker et al., 2019). Walker et al. (2019) explain similar sentiments about the South African education experience of most learners due to the strongholds of the apartheid legacy by stating that segregated patterns of schooling, based on wealth, class, or race build segregated communities. Thus, some of the ideals of democracy have not translated into better education for all.

The inception of democracy ushered in a new educational identity for South Africa which subsequently brought with it the complexity of delivering an education system that meets the needs of all citizens. The South African Schools Act (SASA), No. 84 of 1996 (RSA,1996b) aims at providing compulsory and equal education, but not necessarily free. The principles of SASA are meant to be effectuated by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) which

comprise parents, teacher representatives, learners, and school support staff. This decentralises the state's power in education (Soudien & Sayed, 2005). In this regard, SASA is met with criticism by Soudien and Sayed (2005) in their study that examined the governance of secondary schools in three provinces in South Africa. Their research brought to light a disparity between policy intentions and their actual impact, revealing that schools' internal procedures could lead to new forms of exclusion. The study also emphasised that SGBs wield significant power in determining essential aspects of school responsibility, including setting school fees, formulating language policies, teacher appointments, and learner admissions, among other key responsibilities. Soudien and Sayed (2005) pointed out that the decentralisation of power becomes problematic when advantaged schools seek to uphold their pre-1994 standards. This often results in the exclusion of Black parents from SGBs and Black teachers from staff appointments. The three schools investigated justified and accepted these actions, believing that upholding certain standards was necessary.

Similar studies (Chisholm, 2012; Luckett & Shay, 2020) advocate that the state of public education today is worse than it was under apartheid. According to Chisholm (2012), the state's transference of power to SGBs meant that schools in wealthy communities could use fees to appoint additional teachers and maintain infrastructure and so maintain quality. Whilst education is available to all, Luckett and Shay (2020) claim that the state's power in addressing the legacy of apartheid education has been largely affirmative, not transformative due to the disparities between public and private education standards.

In light of the dynamics of power in education, particularly in an unequal South African educational system as expressed above, Piper (2007) contributes that the variety and complexity in South African society make the notion of a common and shared educational identity difficult to define and implementing a "one-size-fits-all" educational identity is inadequate in meeting the needs of all equitably. South African society consists of not only (indigenous) Africans, but also of people of European and Asian descent, as well as others who may be termed partially indigenous (Palmer & De Klerk, 2012). Given the past legislated discrimination based on race, inequality is ingrained in the make-up of this multi-racial society. Van der Berg and Hofmeyr (2018, p. 3) characterise such inequality in education as a "bimodal" where the smaller part of the current school system, mainly schools historically serving Whites and Indians, perform similarly to schools in developed countries, and the bigger parts of the system, historically serving mainly Black and Coloured children, performs extremely weakly, also in comparison to poorer African countries. Workman's (2019, p. 1277)

study that explored education models of South Africa found that the imported Outcomes Based Education (OBE) policy was implemented due to political pressure as a “quick fix” to redress social imbalances but was later deemed unsuccessful as it ignored the South African context. In addition, Workman (2019) asserts that the CAPS does take the South African context into account. However, Workman suggests that the realisation of quality learning, as outlined in CAPS, depends on the presence of quality teachers. Consequently, teachers could potentially wield the power to bring about positive changes in the South African educational context.

2.2.2.2 Teacher power in education

Philipson and Philipson (2020) claim that teacher power in education has not always been acknowledged, and during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, it seemed that governments saw schools as little more than holding areas so parents could resume work. Yet if the pandemic taught us one thing, it was to be respectful of teachers and their daily work: not just to keep learners occupied, but to keep them engaged in learning. According to Le Grange (2021), schools serve as places of safety and security for children, encompassing not only a physical dimension but also a moral one where they are vulnerable during the educational process. Autio (2014) states that the term ‘moral’ implies professional ethics, as the teacher is responsible for the learner’s development.

Nevertheless, referencing a study by Aruta et al. (2019, p. 316), the relationship between a teacher and a learner is characterised as 'power distance,' wherein the teacher assumes a position of greater control and authority (power position), while the learner occupies a more dependent and powerless position. For the present study, the “power distance” (Aruta et al., 2019, p. 316) relationship is challenged by adopting a “radical posture” as espoused within critical pedagogy by Freire (1970, p. 49). Giroux (2009) defines this relationship as the creation of an atmosphere where teachers and learners develop common sense through theory, practice, and critical analysis, and where they can question and discuss the effective relationships between learning and social transformation.

According to Hughes et al. (1993), “Power has been defined as the capacity to produce effects on others” (p. 116). Through the power that an individual possesses, they can influence the behaviour and attitudes of their followers. French et al. (1959) explore five different types of power that a teacher should be aware of within the classroom dynamic. These powers include expert power, legitimate power, coercive power, and referent power.

The first is *expert power* and, according to Hughes et al. (1993, p. 121), "some people can influence others through their relative expertise in particular areas". To become a teacher in South Africa, one of two routes may be followed, namely: a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree or a three/four-year bachelor's degree followed by a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015). Through these two academic routes, accumulated knowledge is attained. Thus, a power imbalance of knowledge could be assumed in the classroom as teachers may believe that they are the powerholders of content knowledge and experience, and learners have no knowledge and experience to contribute to teaching and learning (Kosar & Calik, 2011). The underlying assumption of expert power is that without the exercise of power by the teacher over the learner through knowledge, the learner cannot learn, and the teacher will not be perceived as competent (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983). However, based on Perumal's study in 2016, she asserted that the current curriculum, grounded in the principles of critical pedagogy, advocates for social justice and democracy. It embodies the intention to educate for liberation and social transformation. Perumal's (2016) assertion sheds light on the significance of challenging the assumptions associated with expert power to avoid perpetuating oppressive classroom practices.

In a South African study examining teachers' experiences with inclusive education, Ntombela (2011) discovered that teachers interviewed from three distinct primary schools expressed feeling inadequately prepared for implementing inclusive education policies. Similarly, Hay et al. (2001) investigated 2,577 teachers' experiences of dealing with diversity and inequality in the Free State province and found that they appear to be mindful of South African-related problems, but do not exhibit adequate knowledge. Their study highlights while a teacher's expert power in subject content may be sufficient, ensuring the delivery of equitable and inclusive education in a democracy like South Africa demands careful attention and consideration (Hay et al., 2001). Therefore, the present study harnesses literature, namely, *Macbeth,* for the dispensation of education democratically and inclusively to realise expert power that teachers could yield in the English Home Language classroom.

Legitimate power, also known as positional power and official authority, refers to the authoritative power provided by the official position of a person (Hitt et al., 2005). In addition, Hughes et al. (1993, p. 115) state that teachers can "exert influence through requests or demands deemed appropriate by their role and position". As the sanctioned authority in the classroom with legitimate power, the teacher can assign tasks and manage the workload

administrated to learners, but this power is based on learners' beliefs that their teacher has the legitimate right to prescribe behaviour for them and to influence them.

Segalo and Rambuda (2018) employed a qualitative approach to explore eight South African public high school teachers' views relating to disciplining learners. By conducting interviews through a focus group, they found that this small sample of teachers expressed an extreme sense of powerlessness in the respective classes that they teach which was attributed to a lack of respect, no parental involvement, and insufficient resources to properly deliver lessons. Similarly, other studies (Rossouw, 2003; Mohapi, 2014 Segalo & Sihlobo, 2021) depict a grim outlook on the future trajectory of learners, granting legitimate power to their teachers. These teachers are confronted with persistent classroom behavioural challenges that hinder effective education. Rossouw (2003) asserts that the participation of youth in the liberation struggle leading to 1994 resulted in learners developing an agency of resistance towards adults in education. Additionally, the heightened emphasis on human rights in the context of increasingchild abuse has led many learners in recent years to question the safety of the classroom space.Consequently, negotiating the legitimate power of authority meant to be vested in teachers becomes challenging.

From the perspective of learners, most South African public-school learners feel unsafe due to the abuse of the legitimate power of authority teachers wield over them as brought to light by De Wet (2020). In his study that explored 68 carefully selected South African English language newspaper articles as textual data to investigate teacher-on-learner violence in South African schools, he found that corporal punishment is administered based on cultural and religious grounds as well as their unfamiliarity with alternative disciplinary strategies (De Wet, 2020). Furthermore, teachers perpetrate sexual violence based on their learners' alleged provocative demeanour and attire. In some communities in South Africa, consensual sexual relations between teachers and learners are, disturbingly, accepted (De Wet, 2020).

Teachers are resistant and unprepared to deal with multi-cultural and multi-racial classrooms as found in Mncube and Harber's (2014) study of 90 desegregated schools in the Western Cape. Most teachers that were interviewed expressed exasperation at having to commit to adopting an anti-racist pedagogy and effectively turned a blind eye to the racial antagonisms displayed by parents in and out of school (Mncube & Harber, 2014). Learners' awareness of teachers' unpreparedness or hostility that reinforces racial divisions may lead to the withholding of legitimate power of authority. Consequently, poor discipline in the classroom may prevail as a result. If this balance of power between the teacher and the learner

is left unchecked, South African classroom environments will perpetually be characterised as a victim and perpetrator model of schooling (De Wet, 2020). In view of the literature outlined above that depicts the complexity of teaching and learning in South African society, this study highlights the imperativeness of teachers to utilise their legitimate power to teach texts, such as *Macbeth*, in a way that extends beyond the school environment into the private lives of learners.

Referring to McCroskey and Richmond's (1983) study, a teacher's *coercive power* relies on a learner's anticipation that punishment will ensue if they do not comply with the teacher's attempts to influence. The strength of a teacher's coercive power, as suggested by McCroskey and Richmond, is determined by the learner's perception of the likelihood that the teacher will impose punishment for non-compliance (McCroskey & Richmond, 1983). Relatively recent literature (Nakpodia, 2010; Dakir et al., 2022; Lenkauskaitė & Masiliauskienė, 2019) has found that the threat of punishment may have some significant impact on the learner but also alerts teachers to the negative impact on the learner. For instance, in a study that explored teachers' approaches to discipline in Nigerian high schools, Nakpodia (2010) found that ill-discipline among learners has grown into an epidemic that sees senior teachers resorting to punishments that touch on personal dignities such as ridicule, sarcasm, and corporal punishment among others because traditional approaches do not work. In another study, twenty-three student teachers at the University of Lithuania were surveyed to understand their perceptions of teacher and learner relationships. Lenkauskaitė and Masiliauskienė (2019) found that the most evident way in which these future teachers would deal with issues of discipline is through a strong sense of control through coercive power in the form of physical activities.

The two aforementioned studies illustrate contrasting manifestations of coercive power employed to control learners' behaviour. The escalation of learner indiscipline tends to correlate with the implementation of more extreme forms of coercive power. Interestingly, Lenkauskaitė and Masiliauskienė (2019) contend that the imposition of strict coercive power results in learners becoming passive, driven by fear of associated punishments, while teachers monopolise knowledge. They characterise the over-reliance on coercive power as embodying a "banking" attitude toward teaching (Lenkauskaitė & Masiliauskienė, 2019 p. 9185). Similarly, within the critical pedagogy framework, Freire (1970, p. 72) terms the act of the teacher depositing knowledge in learners as the "banking concept of education". To remedy this, Tlhapi (2015) suggests that educators should develop authority by displaying expertise in

curriculum delivery in an effective way that harnesses learners' experiences, rather than by using coercive power to discipline learners.

Referent power, as defined by Hughes et al. (1993), "refers to the potential influence one has due to the strength of the relationship between the leader and the followers" (p. 114). In this power, the personal traits of people who are taken as role models and admired are at the forefront (Isaac et al., 2022). Certain teachers can exert influence on learners through their personality traits, and according to Dahl (as cited in Gündoğdu, 2022), individuals subjected to such power attempts tend to mimic the power holder, attempting to emulate their behaviour. Teachers with referent power can set goals for learners and provide a strong source of inspiration to them in achieving these goals. According to Schrodt et al. (2008), when teachers demonstrate a commitment to the class by being authentic and genuine, and when they relate to the class in a manner that is open and approachable, such teachers are, in essence, inviting their learners to join them as relational partners in the learning process. It stands to reason that referent power in this study of learners' engagements with issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, and how that relates to their lived experiences, constitutes one of the primary mechanisms through which healthy and productive teacher-learner relationships are negotiatedand sustained.

2.2.2.3 Learner power in education

In South Africa, there is an abundance of policy documentation with the intention of fostering transformation in educational institutions. These policies favour the creation of enabling conditions that are conducive to power-sharing and collective decision-making (DBE, 2011). However, studies indicate that social activism among students in higher education and learners in basic education institutions is widespread. It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is often challenging to describe comprehensively (Osipian, 2016; Stuurman, 2018; Langa et al., 2017). Osipian (2016, p. 217) defines activism "as a doctrine or practice that emphasises direct vigorous action, especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue". Therefore, student activism can be viewed as a form of action or practice that seeks to make changes to how systems function in education, or which challenges a particular paradigm, be it politically, socially, economically, or otherwise. Further related to activism, Stuurman (2018) states that protests are a prominent manifestation in response to ongoing disagreement or the condemnation of a certain viewpoint. It is also defined as a situation in which people assemble and demonstrate strong opposition to something (Altbach, 1989). In most cases,

protests are instigated by issues that have a direct impact on the learning population, especially those that are very close to their hearts.

During the time of the rise of protests against apartheid and its separate and unequal education system, student and learner activism in South Africa was related to other societal struggles, predominantly for Black people (Stuurman, 2018). In 1976, the Soweto uprising, led predominantly by school learners protesting against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, stands out from other political uprisings due to the alarming number of child casualties resulting from a single instance of political protest. During this event, the police killed 195 learners and injured a further 410 (Franklin, 2003). This would be the historical moment that is temporal and thematic to the present agency of learners' social activism in education as Gukelberger's (2020, p. 4) case study found that the "master narrative" of the Soweto uprisinghas become institutionalised and has matured from conceiving the youth of the apartheid periodas a "lost generation" to characterising them as youth symbols that shape the diverse landscapes of informal and formal politics that one finds in South Africa today.

In the current democracy of South Africa, Naicker (2016) contends that the ongoing moment is transformative. It is evident that the learner population has connected their struggles to the 1976 Soweto uprising, viewing it as a continuation of the unfinished task of dismantling the legacy of apartheid. This is in light of the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements in historically Black higher education institutions which were lauded for their achievement in raising awareness about the funding crisis in higher education in South Africa and significant contribution to the re-centring of learners' voices in decision-making processes as well as in holding government accountable (Langa et al., 2017). Such events are reminders that power is not absolute. Moreover, it demonstrates how learners can self-actualise through critical consciousness to determine the quality of their livelihoods. However, Stuurman (2018) states that if this is how social activism in education is to be understood, for democracy and social justice, South Africa may continue to produce low-quality democracy.

In one case study that sought to report on racism in a historically White South African high school, Rasekgala et al. (2012) found that the management of the school had done little toward racial integration among learners and, as a result, White and Black learners kept apart. The report also found that preferential and differential treatment of learners was based on race and was not aligned with transformation standards in policy documents (Rasekgala et al., 2012). The above case study is important to mention as it reflects unresolved issues in high schools that often lead to learners taking matters into their own hands when transformational

standards are not implemented. Other studies (Hiss & Peck, 2020; Christie & Mckinney, 2017) sought to expose learners demonstrating their frustration with racial prejudice and differential treatment based on race through violent and destructive protests.

Hiss and Peck (2020) cite an example of a public high school in KwaZulu-Natal where learners boycotted classes and engaged in protests such as stoning cars due to mistreatment and a shortage of teachers. Similarly, in their study on the transition of historically White high schools post-democracy, Christie and McKinney (2017) found that these schools exemplify the entangled power matrix characteristic of coloniality. Their research provides a clear example of how deep historical inequalities persist well beyond the formal end of colonialism. In their examination, Christie and McKinney (2017) investigated an incident where learners from a girls' high school utilised social media to protest against incidents of racism. The issues included school rules that regulated their hairstyles and prohibited the use of African languages. Their findings revealed that more incidents in similar types of schools began to surface through learner activism. Concerning the same example of learner power at the high school for girls, Hiss and Peck (2020, p. 4) found that an analysis of the school's CoC reveals an attempt at cultivating a particular White middle-class womanhood through the guise of "good schooling".

At a micro level, the learner within the school experiences a myriad of power dynamics daily through socialisation, and this encourages a critical outlook of such experiences as it assists in describing and exploring the essence of power that emerges from learners' responses. Devine and Kelly (2006) state that the exercise of power between learners, and how they experience inclusion and exclusion in peer relations, models their perceptions of themselves. Discrimination, violence, and social expectations of learners' achievements and identities are among some dynamics of power experienced during youth learners' schooling years as pointed out by Nieto (2004). Comprehending the power dynamics in education serves as a foundation for understanding how learners experience these dynamics in their lives. Framing the study within an engagement with the play, *Macbeth*, opens discussions about dominance, control, and violence as mechanisms of power.

As a mechanism of power, bullying is overt in schools. Bullying is an international phenomenon (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2017), the occurrence of which has become increasingly evident in South African schools (Isdale et al., 2017; Juan et al., 2018). Negative and intentional actions aimed at causing physical and psychological harm to one or more individuals who have difficulty defending themselves are referred to as "bullying" (Gladden et al., 2014; Olweus, 1993). In addition,

Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) state that bullying is a specific form of aggression, which is repeated, and involves an imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator. For this study that explores issues of power, bullying is understood in terms of threats that provide the means through which some learners could control the behaviour of others through their subjection (Horton, 2019). In addition, Volk et al. (2014, p. 327) state that bullying is "aggressive goal-directed behaviour that harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance". Through this understanding, focus on the role that bullying plays in power relations may be brought to light.

In a Canadian study, Vaillancourt et al. (2003) examined bullying distinguished by power and social status in a sample of 555 Grade 6 to 10 learners and found that although generally viewed by peers as disliked and aggressive, a substantial number of bullies were also seen as both popular and powerful with leadership qualities and competencies. The implicit social power of bullies is not simply an issue of size, strength, or greater number, but rather is connected to broader values that allow for the affordance of social status, as pointed out by Horton (2019). Other studies (Hawley, 2003; Olweus, 1995; Veenstra et al., 2007) have argued that one main motivation behind bullying is to obtain higher status, prestige, and power within a peer group. Since striving for status is considered a ubiquitous human goal (Lindenberg, 2001), it would be reasonable to assume that the bully is guided by a desire to establish high status within his or her group. In terms of the means of obtaining status, research has documented that bullies derive satisfaction from inflicting injury on others (Olweus, 1995). Additionally, studies indicate that bullies understand the emotions involved in victimisation but do not share these emotions (Happé & Frith, 1996). Moreover, bullies may view domination as more rewarding than being seen as socially competent (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001).

In a South African study, Steyn and Singh (2018) utilised purposeful sampling to identify five secondary schools in the Uthungulu district of KwaZulu-Natal, where the issue of bullying was most prevalent. Their findings indicated that three key factors contributing significantly to bullying behaviour are situated at the level of the family, the school, and the community. At the family level, Steyn and Singh (2018) discovered that a significant number of bullying learners come from broken homes, impoverished upbringings, and lack positive role models (Steyn & Singh, 2018). Secondly, peer pressure was critical in advancing bullying since learners felt a need to belong to a group (Steyn & Singh, 2018). Thirdly, at the level of community, learners felt that the absence of after-school programmes and a lack of facilities,

particularly in rural communities, misdirected youngsters into engaging in other destructive vices such as forming gangs and indulging in drugs and alcohol, to keep themselves occupied (Steyn & Singh, 2018). For this present study, it is important to point out that the above factors contribute to understanding the groundings on which bullies and victims emanate and the power relations that subsequently manifest.

Similar studies show that when bullied, young people's social and cognitive development are negatively impacted, they study in fear, concentration is impaired, schooling outcomes are compromised, and in some instances, bullying has led to the death of the victim, but often through suicide (Gevers & Flisher, 2011; Mncube & Steinmann, 2014). Bullying encompasses a spectrum of behaviours, ranging from name-calling and teasing to escalating threats of violence and, in extreme cases, actual acts of violence, including physical and sexual assault. This was evident in a study conducted by Ngidi and Moletsane (2018), which explored learners' experiences of bullying in a South African township school. In their study, perpetrators of bullying were identified as fellow learners and ex-learners who use the school toilets as places to perform various acts of bullying. Removed and hidden from the teachers' view and supervision, victims are at their mercy (Ngidi & Moletsane, 2018). By delving into literature, particularly in the South African context, that addresses the dynamics of learner power in education, the issues that manifest in the lives of Grade 11 learners in the current study, through an examination of the play Macbeth, can be recognised and better understood.

2.2.3 Civic power

In civic society, which concerns how we live together in a community, power is an uncomfortable topic to talk about because it seems evil and dangerous (Liu, 2018). This alludes to confronting ideas about who truly has power, even in a democracy in which power is meant to be with the citizens. According to Harrison and Boyd (2003, p. 59) "[D]emocracy is associated with something good and wholesome, something worth defending and, if necessary, dying (and killing) for". In contrast to democracy, the play *Macbeth* represents a totalitarian system, as leaders Macbeth and Lady Macbeth employ complete control over their state to maintain power. Whilst power governs and determines the laws of society, learning how power operates is key to being effective and not being exploited. Drawing on Levinson (2014), citizenship encompasses various potential meanings, ranging from a person's legal status within a country to their civil, political, or social standing within a community. It can also extend to the set of behaviours that represent a particular ideal of civic virtue.

In a democracy, power is given to the government by citizens through elections, however, Alscher et al. (2022) claim that democracies and their institutions can only function well if embedded in a culture of democracy that depends on the participation and underlying political sophistication of a country's citizenry. This means that whilst the economic and social success of a democratic government is to be maintained through laws and bureaucracies, civic participation would result in a more efficient and responsive democratic government (Hibbing et al., 2021). In the South African context, significant inequality continues to be a prominent characteristic even through the transition from apartheid to democracy (Francis & Webster, 2019). Therefore, if marginalised citizens become more engaged in their communities, there is potential for a greater sense of civic-mindedness. This engagement may lead to increased participation and challenges to issues in the political and social domains of their lives (Van Stekelenburg et al., 2016). For this study, issues of power in the civic arena are explored through sources such as physical force, wealth, and social norms.

Palmiotto (2016) argues that only when governments can establish a functional society based on social order can citizens and the country be productive. The responsibility for maintaining order in communities often falls on the police, and this role comes with the implicit threat of physical force (Palmiotto, 2016; Jain et al., 2019). During the apartheid era, the South African police force was characterised as politicised state actors with a reputation for brutality, racism, and wielding absolute power over those opposing the national government at the time (Rauch, 2000). In contrast, while the issue of racialist policing diminished in post-apartheid South Africa, the problem of police brutality has persisted. For instance, the Marikana massacre, where 34 Black miners were killed by Black policemen during a labour protest, serves as one example of civic action going terribly wrong (Yesufu, 2022). This raises questions about the levels of desperation that citizens experience and the extremes they resort to in seeking a better quality of life, even if it means putting their lives on the line in the face of police who are willing to defend and protect laws. In the civic arena, the police, as state representatives, serve as custodians for protection, ensuring that order is maintained, even if it requires controlling citizens through the use of force (Sklansky, 2004).

The primal power of physical force in the civic arena is not only associated with the state police but is an issue that pervades communities at large. Lamb (2019) adds that a lack of cohesion within families, particularly in economically depressed communities, is a major determinant of the perpetration of most forms of interpersonal violence. Literature on vigilantism, violent protests, and xenophobia in poor communities in South Africa has

suggested that violence may be facilitated by perverse forms of social cohesion that emerged out of common grievances about community well-being, particularly concerning inadequate delivery of government services and resources (Lamb, 2019; Seedat et al., 2009; Mlambo, 2016). In addition, according to Smith (2019) and Lancaster (2018), high levels of socio-economic dissatisfaction and persistent service delivery issues experienced in poor South African communities contradict post-apartheid bureaucracy and laws concerning transformation and equality. Consequently, these challenges intensify citizens' capacity for violence as a manifestation of hopelessness and a lack of trust in the state's action.

In keeping within this realm of power, forceful and violent forms of control are characteristics of patriarchal cultures that pervade communities by which domination and control of women have led to the idea that men are inherently more powerful (Cooke, 2018). A vigorous advocacy campaign against patriarchy has emerged through the feminist consciousness of many people, more prominently women who see themselves as victims and whose victimisation determines their being in the world as resistance, wariness, and suspicion (Bartky, 2018). Whilst the feminist movement is necessary for combatting the widespread abuse of women globally, a neglected research area evades the reality that violent and non-violent interpersonal abuse does exist and men are also susceptible, albeit to a lesser extent (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001).

Idriss (2022) highlighted that in the patriarchal society we live in, it is a shame for a man to admit that he was being abused. In this regard, there is a strong belief in the theory that women cannot engage in the same harmful practices as men, or at least not in that frequent and severe manner. To fully comprehend the phenomenon of interpersonal abuse in relationships between men and women, relying solely on a feminist standpoint that exclusively considers issues from a female perspective may overlook other aspects of the phenomenon (Durdevic et al., 2022). Studies contribute that whilst men possess a physical advantage over women and are more likely to inflict physical harm, women are also capable of violence but are more prone to psychological abuse that involves the manipulation of masculine stereotypes to damage men (Walsh et al., 2010; Bates, 2020; Rivera & Scholar, 2020). Gender-based social norms and gender socialisation have had significant consequences on how men are expected to behave, act in relationships, and care for their health. Additionally, women can derive power from these norms (Rivera & Scholar, 2020). This is an important consideration in this study as the traditional idea of manhood is used against Macbeth by his wife, Lady Macbeth, to fulfil her desire of attaining power (Chamberlain, 2005).

The above idea leads to an important discussion of the power of social norms as a source of power in the civic arena. Drawing on the ideas of McDonald and Crandall (2015), social norms not only detail what is appropriate behaviour, but these expectations in turn define what the group does, and who the group is. Other studies suggest that when behaviours are interdependent, the motivation to engage in such behaviour is contingent on a person's beliefs about what is commonly done and/or approved of in society. Therefore, social norms are the shared understandings that govern the behaviour of members of a society (Ostrom, 2000; Bicchieri et al., 2021). Social hierarchies are formed because social norms are created by agents with a high-ranking status to direct the behaviour of agents over whom they have authority. As a result, constraints on social behaviour that dictate what is permitted and obligated are applied to the daily lives of people (Cummins, 2021).

A different source of power in the civic arena is wealth. Studies define wealth as an accumulation of resources (Plourde, 2010; Rowlingson & Mckay, 2012). In addition, Hinson-Hasty (2014) states that wealth relates to one’s capacity to engage easily and productively in society and this means having enough money to fulfil basic needs such as food, adequate shelter, basic healthcare, and education. Understanding wealth inequality has unique significance in South Africa, where the co-existence of extreme poverty and extreme wealth is starkly visible (Chatterjee, 2019). Inequalities in wealth tend to have numerous adverse effects on a country's sustainability and the economy. Such disparities exacerbate socioeconomic conditions and contribute to increased levels of crime, infant mortality, and a lack of opportunity for social mobility (Stiglitz, 2012; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

South African equality-oriented policies have not effectively reduced income inequalities. Opportunities for social upliftment are often limited to a relatively small group of formerly disadvantaged individuals with sufficient access to education and the necessary social connections to benefit from affirmative action programs like Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Critics also argue that the "emergence of a BEE-elite" (Freund, 2007, p. 4) has led former equality-oriented activists into the inequality regime (Bond, 2009).

Despite the inclusion of some members of formerly disadvantaged groups in the upper echelons of society, South Africa largely remains a "two nations project", making it challenging to foster an equality-oriented discourse (Leubolt, 2015, p. 62). This indicates that power is concentrated in a small elite group that controls the means of production and economicstructures, leaving the majority of poor citizens struggling to thrive (Francis & Webster, 2019).This draws attention to the issue of power elites who exist in a societal domain that transcends

the environments of ordinary citizens. These power elites are positioned to make decisions that carry significant consequences, as they command the major hierarchies and organisations of modern society. They play pivotal roles in large corporations, control economic mechanisms of the state, and claim its prerogatives (Mills, 2019). In this sense, power is perceived as strategically attaining high-ranking positions to influence how economic matters unfold in one's favour. This perpetuates socio-economic issues in communities. Pasara and Garidzirai (2020) highlight this issue, claiming that equitable wealth distribution and the increase of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would assist in alleviating such issues and creating more socially involved and caring citizens.

As learners engage with issues of power in the play *Macbeth*, this section of literature gives way to an exploration of their understandings and places within the civic landscape of South African society they are a part of to enable well-informed and responsible citizens.

2.2.4 Fictional representations of power in the play Macbeth

The Shakespearean play *Macbeth*, centred on issues of power and its ubiquitous nature, is part of the prescribed literature in South African schools for Grade 11 English Home Language learners (DBE, n.d.). South African learners encounter Shakespeare's plays in the English Home Language classroom from Grade 10 to Grade 12. This means that by the age of 17 years old, a learner would have studied three Shakespearean plays that range from a selection of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*, among others, that teachers may select to teach in their classes.

Whilst Shakespeare's plays feature in the South African English Home Language classroom and have been prescribed over many decades, few studies call to question the reason for his text's long-standing stint in a South African setting, particularly the play *Macbeth.* Warren (2020) claims that the English classroom is no longer just a place where grammar and vocabulary are taught. It is also a place where teachers should be helping learners develop the knowledge, values, and skills to become both active and effective participants in society (Warren, 2020). Literature, such as *Macbeth*, serves as a catalyst through which critical understandings, identifications, and reflections are made by learners. Young (2016, p. 41) remarks that thinking about Shakespeare from a South African point of view offers numerous insights into his plays not just from a "Euro-American perspective". By engaging with issues of power in the play *Macbeth*, through events and characters, South African learners transpose their lived experiences to the text's representations uniquely and consciously.

The representation of an action can shape how the audience perceives or responds to it. Thus, representation plays a pivotal role when grappling with issues of power in the play *Macbeth*. According to Young (1999), the most important part of a representation is that it stands for something. This raises the question of how issues of power are represented in the play *Macbeth*. Do issues of power in the text lend themselves to understanding neglected issues of power in reality? Are people motivated by greed, ambition, jealousy, and wickedness in society? Is this reality one which has been accepted in society? Weisberg and Goodstein (2009) assert that the fictional worlds crafted in literature are rooted in reality, and these fictional realms are transposed into the real world through nuanced inferences made by readers. Confronting and critically engaging with issues of power in fictional texts like *Macbeth* addresses the concern of readers who may readily accept fictional representations of power-related issues but may dismiss or neglect the relevance of power dynamics in their own lives.

In the play *Macbeth*, events and characters symbolising issues of power are at times seen as detached from reality due to their fictional nature and the designation as an exam text for learners (Coles, 2009). However, this viewpoint can be contested, as Davidson (2018) asserts that literature, through fictional descriptions, captures the concepts of our non-fictional ordinary life. Despite the abstract nature of conceptual representation, literature provides a means to understand concepts inherent in our everyday lives. When issues of power are prevalent through violence, corruption, personal inflictions, and wickedness, we tend to be disgruntled and hurt by it whenever it shows up on the news or occurs in our lives. It has an immediate effect and consequence for those involved. It is no longer a representation but rather a reality. This draws on the metaphorical distinction between fictional representations of power in the play, *Macbeth*, and the issues of power that increasingly pervade our social lives and communities as South African citizens and members of a global community (Kesur, 2014).

According to Aruta et al. (2019), social encounters frequently entail a dynamic assessment of social power and control between individuals, leading to an ongoing effort to adapt one's behaviour based on the perceived power dynamics between oneself and others. If this is the case, what limits the extent of the struggle for power? In the play, *Macbeth*, which explores the idea of the expansion of ambition, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth demonstrate extreme brutality and wickedness to achieve their desire for power, even between themselves at times (Camati, 2005). In South Africa, the prevalence of violent crime surpasses that of many other countries, encompassing elevated rates of murder, rape, and aggravated assault (Lamb, 2019). Such crimes emanate from issues of power in society and their common occurrences

raise many questions concerning issues of power in literature. Do these occurrences of crime within the play (*Macbeth*), help to solve the problem or do they encourage and normalise such issues? Whose responsibility is it to advise communities and society on the actions that should or should not be taken in order to create a better, non-violent society? In a literature classroom, this informed stance can only be taken once the issues of violence, especially those which we find in South Africa, are discussed and evaluated thoroughly together with the context within which it is located. According to Makombe (2011, p. 5), writers "have a responsibility not only to expose social injustices but also participate in the struggle for a better society". This commitment to advocacy aligns with the principles of critical pedagogy, serving as a motivating force behind the present study, which focuses on Grade 11 learners' engagement with issues of power in Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*.

The play also represents many other issues of power of social and political concern. Macbeth's legitimate and coercive power as King of Scotland is used to recruit murderers serving as figures onto whom Macbeth displaces his considerable anxieties. The murderers are engaged to accomplish a specific, circumscribed task – to murder Banquo. The murderers acknowledge their hierarchical inferiority in act 3 scene 3 by addressing appropriately brief replies to their 'liege' their 'Highness' and 'lord' (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 41).

The assassins of Macbeth are incited to acts of murder via appeals to their sense of masculinity, a tactic Macbeth insidiously employs to coerce his hired accomplices, and which Connelly (2005, p. 111) explains as resulting from a "profound confusion over the roles of men and women in the nightmare world ruled by Macbeth and his Lady". According to Hateley (2004), the text "Macbeth" wields cultural authority in shaping perspectives on gender. It presents a narrative that instructs on navigating the potential pitfalls of heeding powerful yet perilous women. The play functions as a tool for negotiating the interplay between ideals of masculinity, power, and the realities of post-feminism in contemporary culture. Drawing on the above claim, the play could contribute to normative gender values and sustain powerful hegemonic masculinity if not critically examined in English classes. Lady Macbeth focuses on the importance of embodying powerful masculine characteristics to manifest power, whilst power and masculinity are demanded from Macbeth to fulfil evil deeds (Ferdous, 2017).

According to AlRaznah (2020), Lady Macbeth's power conflict lies in her dilemma – she is a bad wife who urges her husband to kill the king and she is a faint-hearted woman who feels guilty. Ultimately, the pangs of conscience and conflict destroy her mind. Kemp (2010) contends that Shakespeare tailored his writing to align with the preferences of an audience

primarily interested in narratives centred around a male perspective of human experience, rather than focusing on experiences more central to the lives of most women. Although Lady Macbeth is one of the most overpowering female figures on the stage of Shakespearean theatre, she cannot exceed male authority and power. When Macbeth becomes the king, she switches to the role of a submissive, seemingly powerless wife (ALRaznah, 2020). Does this mirror gender injustice in a South African society that grapples with issues of gender-based violence (GBV)? Does Shakespeare have the power to prescribe gender identities to readers or does he allow contestations about their vision of gender?

In a 2019 study by Mohammed, an exploration of the male-female relationship and gender dynamics in Macbeth revealed that Shakespeare does not appear to approach gender as a straightforward binary division between male and female. Shakespeare shows the relationship between gender and power which can be related to the patriarchal discourse as being utilised by both genders. Mohammed (2019) explicates that men are portrayed as strong-willed and courageous, but a female character like Lady Macbeth is given a ruthless, power- hungry personality, which is typically, in the period, more associated with masculinity. The issue with this is that Lady Macbeth's mockery of her husband's manhood leads her to proclaim her unwomanly resolution and reinforces hegemonic masculinity.

As noted earlier, Macbeth ascends to power through a series of killings, driven by the intense ambition of his wife. In the end, Lady Macbeth, consumed by shame and the corrupting influence of the power she sought, succumbs to insanity and takes her own life. Given Macbeth's temporary realm of power as King of Scotland, control becomes easier to obtain and it corrupts his mind as seen in act 3 scene 2 'full of scorpions is my mind' (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 34). The personas of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth take on a menacing quality, exerting control over the lives of others through malevolence. This prompts the question of why such a representation of power is included in a Grade 11 classroom. According to Kesur (2014), the issue of corruption has been perceived either as a structural challenge rooted in politics and economics or as a cultural and individual moral dilemma. Macbeth initially believes that seizing the highest authority and a significant amount of power would bring him immense happiness. However, this proves to be far from the truth. In his pursuit of power, Macbeth not only fails to gain anything positive but also loses everything that once brought him happiness, including society's respect, the companionship of his wife, peace of mind, and the benefits of adhering to sound moral values. Macbeth himself acknowledges that his "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more"

(Shakespeare, 2015, p. 134). Power has corrupted him to such an extent that he hallucinates Banquo's ghost appearing at a banquet.

From the moment Macbeth encounters the witches, corruption takes hold of him. Nothing is deemed sufficient, and he discards anything that obstructs his path, illustrating how the insatiable thirst for limitless power can drive an individual to a complete disregard for human values. This transformation is so profound that he eventually no longer requires the influence of Lady Macbeth. According to Hayat et al. (2021), Shakespeare's portrayal of the character of Macbeth is grounded in a comprehension of basic human nature. It is shaped by the fundamental assumption that humans are inherently greedy and selfish. When presented with an opportunity to fulfil their hidden desires, individuals may not refrain from engaging in cruel acts such as murder, fraud, and corruption. Exploring such themes of power, as argued by Kesur, enhances our understanding of humanity's capacity for evil and the relentless pursuit of power (2014). Naturally, it seems apparent that the king must be loyal to Scotland above his interests. However, Macbeth brings only chaos to his country (Mohammed, 2019), which contrasts with the initial impression of Macbeth as a valiant warrior loyal to his kinsman fighting on the battlefield to defeat the traitor, Thane of Cawdor, to a tyrant by the end. With the death of Macbeth, the play suggests the restoration and reestablishment of a healthy and natural relationship between sovereign and subject and a true king once more. Thus, representations of issues of power as discussed above open engagements with issues of social justice in classrooms.

2.2.5 Engaging with issues of social justice including power in the English classroom

To deal with issues of social justice in an English classroom, it is important to introduce a play in which these issues may arise, for the learners to have a greater understanding of what a social justice issue may be. This is the benefit of introducing the play, *Macbeth*, in South African schools. The play enables a conversation about issues of power, and once the teacher is aware of the association learners have with power, it may become easier for the teacher to address the topic.

The aim of teaching social justice within the classroom is to foster a positive outcome from the discussion with the learners, through which issues of social justice may be reinforced or taught. Blake (2015, p. 1) defines social justice as "a hope to build a society in which individuals have equal access to resources and receive equitable treatment regardless of race, gender, religion, sexuality, income level or disability". A lack of social justice is evident in the

play, *Macbeth*, with characters like Lady Macbeth and Macbeth's corruption of power. Admittedly, at the onset of the play, it can be seen among themselves, that Lady Macbeth's manipulation, and subsequently, Macbeth's descent into murder and madness, creates a rift between them. Ultimately, Macbeth's misuse of power, marked by totalitarianism and tyranny, unleashes chaos throughout Scotland. Likewise, numerous students involved in the current study experience lives marked by injustice or are subjected to oppressive forces that wield power to exert control, be it rooted in factors like gender, race, wealth, government, or their immediate surroundings.

It is important to note that teaching issues of social justice must be dealt with sensitively and with great consideration for all learners. Alsup and Miller (2014) state that teachers must be prepared for a diversity of learners and should encourage a sense of respect and equality among all learners. This is especially important within the South African context as South Africa is known for its rich diversity, especially within schools. Therefore, it is imperative that the teacher not only encourages respect for this diversity within the classroom but also educates the learners on being respectful to others, others' views, and themselves in their everyday lives. Hayik (2011, p. 96) states that an English teacher's responsibility is to educate students to social justice issues in addition to the responsibility of teaching them the English language. This is done by teaching learners to be critical thinkers. This is reinforced by Alsup and Miller(2014) who state that injustices in society are constantly portrayed in the English syllabus andshould be confronted. English teachers, therefore, have the opportunity to foster a clearer understanding of the violations as well as common issues of social justice within a society while teaching the core ideas of the English language. Through this, the teacher may be able to pave the way for learners to become critical thinkers.

Rapps et al. (2001) identify critical thinking as an act which requires both skills as well as disposition. Critical thinking is developed over time and with experience. A critical thinker does not merely accept everything they have been told; instead, they actively seek to attain a deeper understanding by considering the context and incorporating their own experiences into the process. This would allow learners to understand the consequences of a society in which issues of social justice are not reinforced. Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) underscore the notion that social justice can be fostered when learners develop critical thinking skills, contributing to the creation of a society where individuals are responsible, respectful of others, and actively practice social justice in various contexts. Facilitating the development of critical thinking requires teachers to impart skills such as analysis and judgement, among others. Additionally,

empowering learners with critical consciousness, as advocated by Freire (2000), equips them to confront injustices.

An effective application of critical pedagogy to cultivate critical thinking is through the teaching of Shakespearean plays like *Macbeth*, as suggested by Hayik (2011). This approach involves immersing learners in a cultural context that may be unfamiliar to them. The teacher achieves this by addressing social issues pertinent to the learners' lives, posing critical questions, and facilitating thoughtful discussions on the events, characters, and their societal practices within the play (Hayik, 2011).

This allows the learners to not only enjoy the play, but to think further about each character, and ask relevant questions. Questions are designed to make judgements (Do they see this character as a good or bad character and why?), and to find points of relatability (Which character do they see most as themselves? Why is this so?). These questions bring about discussions and debates on the actions of characters within the play and how they may be judged. However, the judgement that arises may be one-dimensional by pitting good against bad. Therefore, it was important to facilitate discussions around the incidents and the characters (Hayik, 2011) to gain a deeper and more complex understanding. For example, in the Shakespearean play being studied, Macbeth illustrates his abuse of power through acts like the murders of Banquo and Macduff's family, earning him the designation of a tyrant. This stands in stark contrast to Duncan, who showcased qualities of generosity and kindness, earning him widespread respect among the people in Scotland.

The incorporation of critical pedagogy in the classroom provides learners with the opportunity to actively contribute to the sharing of knowledge. This engagement not only shapes their own ideologies but also extends its influence to their homes and communities (Giroux, 2009). The learners gain confidence in their ideas and beliefs as well as broaden their understanding of issues surrounding the broad concept of power (Gomez et al., 2021). This is particularly important in the discussion around the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, and the issues of power found within it. Learners can analyse issues of power and decide whether they feel like these representations do indeed reflect an unspoken reality, whether in their personal lives, communities, or South Africa as a whole. These representations of power, especially those found within the play, may portray the actions of people within the community and government. This allows learners to perceive the life of these characters not only from their view but from the view of the characters themselves, creating a better understanding of why the characters would choose to behave the way that they do. These discussions focus on issues

of social justice which may be present in learners' homes, schools, and communities, and could allow them to understand the impact of these actions on society. It would also allow the learners to understand that they have the power to adjust the trajectory of not only their lives but the lives of others, through their beliefs and ideologies. It must also be understood that engaging with issues of social justice could be met with resistance from various sectors, including the learners, school, community, and/or teachers, as challenges to long-held ideologies are difficult to accept and change may be painful. However, not engaging with social justice issues could make the process of learners becoming critical thinkers very difficult. If learners do not become critical thinkers, they might continue to accept the status quo of their communities, thus reducing the chances of improving social justice within that community (Guzman et al., 2022).

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed existing literature in the South African and international contexts related to the topic under study. It highlighted the pervasive nature of power-related issues in human social interaction, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of how power operates within the diverse lived experiences of learners. This encompassed contexts such as school and the broader society, influencing the shaping of a South African identity. Subsequently, the literature review delved into fictional representations of power in literature, with a specific focus on the play under investigation, *Macbeth*. The chapter concluded with a discussion of issues concerning social justice in the English classroom.

Attention now shifts to the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter explored the expanding body of literature addressing power dynamics in various dimensions within education and broader social contexts. It concluded by delving into the examination of issues related to social justice, including power in the English Home Language classroom. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of the theoretical framework chosen for this study by drawing on international and local literature. The chapter begins by discussing the principles of *critical pedagogy* espoused by Freire (1970), namely, critical consciousness, power relations, discourse and dialogic education, and problem-posing education to enable praxis. The chapter further discusses CLP as a second theory developed by Borksheim-Black et al. (2014). CLP is explored in this chapter by examining reading *with* and *against* the text's canonicity, context, literary elements, reader response, and assessments. CLP is situated within *critical literacy*, which is, in turn, situated within *critical pedagogy.*

3.2 Theoretical Framework

3.2.1 Critical pedagogy

The primary theoretical underpinning of this study is critical pedagogy which derives from critical theory. Critical theory understands the classroom as a learning space where new knowledge is produced through active engagement and dialogue, grounded in the experiences of learners and teachers alike, and is culturally relevant, socially empowering, and participant-driven (Giroux, 2009). Critical pedagogy was initiated by the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1970), who transformed the ideas and ideals of critical theory, enabling teachers to incorporate this pedagogy in their classrooms. Inspired and developed by his bitter experiences growing up in a Third World country and experiencing abject poverty, he sought a way to break the silence of his learners. He noticed that they were passive in the classroom, lacking a voice and choice (Uddin, 2019). Critical pedagogy was defined by Freire (2000) as a critical approach to education, highlighting the importance of having learners engage actively in their learning process, and being able to find and develop their own opinions

and positions. He recognised the problem that learners were merely memorising what their teachers transferred to them, which led him to champion a movement toward a learner-centred educational experience (Freire, 1978).

Freire acknowledged that the genesis of his ideas originated from Dewey, who highlighted that education should be grounded within the structure of communities to cultivate democratic and mature members (Feinberg & Torres, 2001). In this study, learners and I grappled with Dewey's assertions that education can either produce passive learners who do not engage with issues of power in their lives as citizens of a democratic country or foster a citizenry informed by a concern for justice, happiness, and equality (Giroux, 2009). Freire builds on Dewey's idea by positioning education at the centre of society at large and focuses on issues of power and agency within an educational context. For this study, learners interacted with the text *Macbeth* in the English Home Language classroom as a portal through which they could critically reflect on their lived experiences related to issues of power and their agency. Therefore, critical pedagogy is a clear choice to underpin this study.

Frequently, the scores learners attain in formal tests and examinations are tools used to measure the effectiveness of the teacher and learner performance, as pointed out by Uddin (2019). As a result, teachers may not be interested in engaging learners meaningfully in learning; instead, they are busy preparing learners for these tests and examinations, which will also enable schools to avoid underperformance. Freire (1970) emphasises that facilitating an educational practice directed toward rigid results is authoritarian and reduces learners to objects of the directives teachers impose. Freire (1970) asserts that there is no non-directive education; however, he believes that teachers and learners should be active agents engaged in constructing meaning together. Freire notes that,

> [T]he 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, p. 379).

Other prominent theorists who shaped the development of critical pedagogy include Giroux and McLaren, among others. Giroux (1988) insists that a new discourse needs to be constructed

about the nature of schooling that challenges the shortcomings and failures inherent in traditional views of schooling to reveal new possibilities of thinking about the schooling experience. He argues that schools are not merely instructional sites but also sites where the cultural capital of the dominant society is learned (Giroux, 1988). Thus, teachers are positioned to privilege particular renderings of behaviour, values, and everyday life representations that preserve the interests of those in power (Giroux, 2004; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). According to McLaren (2016, p. 39), dominant cultures can "frame" how subordinate groups live and respond to their cultural system and lived experiences. In other words, the hegemony of a dominant culture has the power to manufacture dreams and desires for both the dominant and subordinate groups. McLaren (2016) describes this process as a way of conditioning subordinate groups to react to ideas and opinions in prescribed ways. The perpetuation of domination is not achieved solely through sheer force, but rather through social practices and structures that appear both inviolable and natural (McLaren, 2016). The hegemony of a dominant culture can persist in classrooms if teachers fail to instruct learners to sustainably and critically question the prevailing values, attitudes, and social practices of the dominant society.

In this study, the observations made by Giroux (1988) and McLaren (2016) concerning the hegemony of the dominant culture serve as critical reflections on whose cultural capital is being preserved and whose is being ignored. Critical pedagogy urges teachers to understand their roles as agents of social change, primarily as encouraging respect, morality, and democracy (Cappy, 2016). Moreover, teachers should expose and critique structures that uphold the interests of those in power. They should create spaces for the cultural capital of learners to be appreciated, fostering an agency that enables the recognition of issues of power in their lived experiences within an educational context. Thus, education serves as a catalyst for empowering learners to become critical, active citizens (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Specifically, within the context of this study, the recommendations put forth by Paulo Freire contribute to the teaching of the text *Macbeth*. These recommendations enable learners to actively engage with issues of power in their lived experiences.

3.2.1.1 Critical consciousness

For a significant portion of the world's population, education is pivotal to a better life and the pursuit of freedom that aligns with the aspiration for happiness. Therefore, the objective of critical pedagogy is to cultivate what Freire (1970) refers to as critical consciousness. This involves critiquing the social relations, social institutions, and social traditions that give rise to

and perpetuate conditions of oppression. Freire (2012, p. 109) also notes that critical consciousness is the "deepening of the attitude of awareness" about social conditions and issues. Rooted in the work of Paulo Freire, contemporary models of critical consciousness have conceptualised it as consisting of critical reflections, political agency, and at the highest level, critical action (Seider et al., 2021; Jemal, 2017). "Critical reflections" involve the process of learning to question oppressive social arrangements and structures, while "political agency" refers to the capacity and commitment to address perceived systemic injustices and bring about social change (Diemer et al., 2016; Seider et al., 2021). Finally, according to Seider et al. (2021), "critical action" refers to the actual engagement in events and activities intended to challenge oppressive forces to bring about social change. Thus, the disruption of the *status quo* and subsequently a confrontation with oppression in the social order is achieved when teachers challenge learners to ask questions that concern issues of power and control, and whose social benefits are being perpetuated or marginalised.

When teaching about sensitive or controversial issues, particularly surrounding issues of power in learners' lived experiences, it was important to create an environment in which learners felt encouraged to voice their opinions and draw on their cultural competencies as building blocks for learning. Learners may find it easier to make sense of the world and their experiences of power culturally, for instance, using their Home Languages or cultural practices in becoming conscientious of experiences, and as such, should effectively turn into a fulfilling learning experience in the English class. Thus, the development of critical consciousness in a multicultural context intersects with Richly and Graves's (2017) claim that by using a culturally responsive pedagogy, teaching and learning can be made more effective. In so doing,learners feel valued as they can contribute to knowledge and their learning experience overall.This aligns with Giroux's (1984) call for a counterhegemonic condition of learning that challenges the neutrality of education, which tends to negate the representation of social groups. Similarly, McLaren (2019) is also of the view that learners need to realise that knowledge is historically and socially rooted, ordered, and structured in specific ways, and thatsome forms of knowledge have more power and legitimacy than others.

In this study, the principle of critical consciousness enables learners to better understand their lives by giving them the cognitive freedom to think critically about issues of power in their lived experiences and society at large so that they may emancipate themselves from previous structures, practices, and norms that oppressed them. This study starts the process of understanding what shapes the thoughts and beliefs of learners by using literature

as a tool to harness the ideals of critical pedagogy, which is to emancipate and educate (Sarroub & Quadros, 2015). By engaging with learners' social identities and the community issues they faced, learners developed skills to enable them to become aware of and resist forms of oppression. Magee and Pherali (2019) refer to this as teachers' effort to immerse themselves in the lives of learners to bring about critical consciousness among learners which contextualises individual experiences. For this study, learners were asked questions which made them recognise and understand issues of power and control within their experiences at school, in their homes, and their communities, and were then able to critically reflect on how events and characters in the play (*Macbeth*) shaped their responses with the belief that they canenact social change.

Mayo (2012) states that critical pedagogy fosters an education that is dynamic, and which prepares learners for a world not as it is, but as it should be. This underscores the enactment of critical consciousness of this study in the English classroom as learners were able to critically analyse issues of social justice. By engaging in emancipatory ideologies, learners could extend their views to their communities, homes, school, and in their daily social interactions among peers. Given the possibility of agency, learners can bring about change in the various domains of their social interactions. The active role in their education wassupported by creating an empowering, democratic, and critical educational environment as recommended by Hytten and Bettez (2011) for social justice education, which is at the core of critical consciousness (Styslinger et al., 2019). According to Hlalele (2012), social justice is concerned with equal justice and opportunities that are not merely subjected to the court of lawbut also in all aspects of human social interaction. This indicates that social justice needs to beprevalent in all social contexts. As the world faces ongoing struggles to address human rights violations occurring within systems of oppression that continue to fortify the walls of the privileged (Pipe & Stevens, 2021), this study provides scaffolded support needed for personallyor socially radical change among learners to address social justice issues in their lives, and in so doing, their agency can proliferate to other learners. The belief in values such as social justice, human rights and freedom, and the agency for one's transformation was the pre- condition for this study.

In her qualitative study, Schell (2019) underpins critical pedagogy to draw expressions of learners' critical consciousness by conducting semi-structured interviews with 22 adolescent refugee English learners from African countries who now live in America. After her oral inquiry with learners concerning issues of inequality, inequity, and injustice, she found that

varying degrees of critical awareness, agency, and action were manifested simultaneously (Schell, 2019). It also became clear that learners' agency and awareness levels were not aligned and called for the urgency of critical pedagogy practices in English Home Language classrooms that nurtures learners' sense of agency as a necessary precursor of action.

Similar to Schell (2019), Stubbs et al. (2022) emphasised the significance of cultivating critical consciousness in learners. This approach makes education relevant to their lives and equips them with the skills needed to think critically about social conditions. Their mixed-method explanatory approach examined the level of critical consciousness of 202 high school learners in the Bahamas and found that though learners strongly support equal treatment of groups in society, few had participated in any related activity toward social justice (Stubbs et al., 2022). This builds on McLaren's (2019) assertion that teachers must be cognisant of how curriculum material can be employed to cultivate critical consciousness, incorporating a pedagogical practice that involves an action component. Ultimately, teachers using critical pedagogy aim for a better life for all by building learners' critical thinking and consciousnesses for a fair society in which power relations are non-exploitative.

3.2.1.2 Power relations

According to Oxford and Spaaij (20202), a key goal of critical pedagogy is to challenge and help transform the power relations that shape social inequalities. In this study, the learners and I critically reflect on power relations and confront issues of social justice recognised in the English Home Language classroom and society at large to begin the process of critical agency. According to Gulgoz (2015), power differences organise social relations across species. The ubiquity of power in learners' social relations is characterised by power hierarchies in school, family, and among their peers. Moreover, the way learners interpret and comprehend societal relations is largely influenced by the power dynamics they have encountered and observed in their lives and communities. These dynamics are evident within social groups, including those based on race, gender, class, status, and wealth, among others (Gulgoz, 2015).

Building on an earlier definition of power explored in this study, I maintain that it is linked to an agent's ability and capacity to influence others to do something they would otherwise not do (Dahl, 1957; Lukes, 1986; Zaaiman, 2020). This power typically belongs to the oppressor, and it is imposed upon the oppressed, often referred to as the powerless. One of the basic elements of such relationships is that the powerholder imposes prescriptions upon the lives of the powerless (Freire, 1970). Witnessing these power relations unconsciously

constructs the knowledge we have of society and the power relations within it. Thus, if learners go through their educational journeys without challenging issues of social justice regarding unequal power relations in their lives, they will not be critical thinkers and continue to experience suppressed lives. Success in navigating the social world both at an individual and group level implies that developing an understanding of power relations is crucial, therefore necessitating the application of critical pedagogy.

According to Freire (1970), dehumanisation is not only evident in those whose humanity has been stolen but also in those who have stolen it, distorting the ideal of a just and equal society promoted in critical pedagogy. The power enjoyed by oppressors, which prevents them from liberating the oppressed or themselves to establish an equal society, perpetuates imbalances of power and an unjust social order. In this study, the learners and I engage with existing systems of power relations in human social interactions. We explore how these systems can either foster conformity or become a practice of freedom and agency for a better future. Freire notes,

> As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression. It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors (1970, p. 56).

The problem is that the socialisation learners undergo (in and out of school) encourages reflections on circumstances and not their interconnectedness, thus, missing the patterns that emerge from power relations in social interactions (Ross, 2018). By applying critical pedagogy, learners can make critical observations of their experiences, makes sense of what they see in everyday life, and give importance to the idea of agency in their circumstances by not viewing them as static. By drawing on bits and pieces of experiences in learners' lives regarding issues of power relations, experiences that existed before will not be taken as a given or unchanging. Like Ross (2018), Ollman (1999) believes that understanding anything in our everyday experience requires that we know something about how it arose and developed and how it fits into the larger context or system of which it is a part.

In an educational context, the teacher is more aware of the ideologies and the construction of knowledge by the learners. They can, therefore, encourage critical thinking within the classroom. Grant and Gilette (2006) underscore the notion that for a teacher to be

truly effective, they need to be more aware of the context within which they teach. The only way for learners to be more aware of these social constructions of power relationships is through the use of meaningful discourse, which should be encouraged within the classroom, harnessing critical thinking. An early study by Dewey (1916) cautions teachers against becoming agents of social control by shaping the dispositions of their learners in a manner that upholds the status quo of oppressive social relationships. Instead, critical teachers should reject neutral schooling, as it indicates ignorance of the issues that learners experience in their lives. In so doing, learners possess the knowledge, values, and skills needed for active participation in society, and ultimately challenge inequalities in society.

The aim for equality in power relations within the classroom is vital in the discussion around societal norms, including oppressive hierarchies of power, both in the play *Macbeth* and in the lives of the learners. Learners should be given the opportunity to observe the power relations within the classroom and endeavour to connect them to their community. According to Naiditch (2010), it is therefore crucial to establish a link between the text and the real world. The text cannot be studied independently but should hold relevance to what can be considered the learners' reality. In this study, the English Home Language classroom served as a convergence point for learners from diverse backgrounds, bringing together a variety of experiences, past behaviours, and current ideologies. This environment not only provided a sense of safety but also facilitated the development of connections or identification of similarities among peers. Consequently, learners felt more comfortable, empowered, and engaged in discourse, fostering the acquisition of additional knowledge.

3.2.1.3 Discourse and dialogic education

According to Kumar (2008, p. 44), the term dialogue signifies the "flow of meaning," which stands in contrast to monologue, representing "one-way communication". In an educational context, this study uses dialogue as more than just an instrument for conversation to take place. Drawing on Freire's (1970, p. 87) assertion that the essence of dialogue is a "true word" capable of fostering critical reflection and action, rather than an inauthentic word incapable of transforming reality, learners and I are regarded as dialogical equals. Learners engaged in semi-structured interviews as part of their participation, addressing issues of power and social justice in their lives. The dialogical encounter between the learners and me was mediated by the world in which power relations could be unveiled. This allowed the learners to articulate their experiences and consequently develop agency to address issues that emerge. As Freire (1970,

p.88) posits, “dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world”. In this process, the dialogue that unfolded between the learners and me was not reduced to the teacher, myself, merely “depositing” ideas in learners or a simple exchange of ideas to be “consumed” by learners (Freire, 1970, p. 89). Rather, it served as a sign of freedom, equality, and responsibility in discovering and transforming the world of learners. By maintaining faith in the ability of others to “name the world”, together with trust between participants, and hope that dehumanisation can be overcome (Roberts, 2000), a safe space for discourse surrounding sensitive issues was created. Thus, education is a catalyst for empowering learners to become critical, active citizens (Giroux & McLaren, 1986) and “transformative intellectuals” (Giroux, 1988, p. 122).

Dialogue also requires a deep love for the world and humans (Durakoglu, 2013). Teachers should practice love-based teaching that is committed to nurturing learners. Teachers liberate learners from the oppressive teaching reality that crushes them when learners sense a true commitment to empowering them (Shih, 2018). Thus, teachers cannot enter into dialogue if teachers do not love the world, life, and people (Freire, 2000).

The constitutive elements of dialogue that Freire (1970) advocates emphasise the importance of teachers understanding their role within the classroom. Teachers would need to undergo a transformation (Izadinia, 2011) by believing in the learners’ capacity to contribute to knowledge. Teachers unwilling to let learners participate in the learning process and unwilling to learn from them will struggle to engage in meaningful discussions and respectful discourse, thus hindering the practice of critical pedagogy in their classrooms. For this study, I also draw on the constitutive element of “humility in dialogue”, as mentioned by Freire:

> How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others—mere "its" in whom I cannot recognize other "I"s? How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of "pure" men, the owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all non-members are "these people" or "the great unwashed"? How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that naming the world is the task of an elite and that the presence of the people in history is a sign of deterioration, thus to be avoided? How can I dialogue if I am closed to—and even offended by—the contribution of others? (Freire, 1970, p. 90).

By pondering the aforementioned questions, I set aside any preconceived notions or knowledge that might contradict what was said by learners. This allowed meaningful discussions to unfold

without resistance or mockery, fostering open exploration of the issues and topics shared by the learners. This leads to what Ramis (2018, p. 285) believes when he says that "to transform the world by saying the *true word* is not a right of only some privileged individuals but a right of everyone", therefore that the conditions for such dialogue need to be created for all.

Humour helps make the learning moment "real", a quality that can reverse the artificial school experience (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 162). In my overall teaching approach, and specifically in the dialogical process in this study, I encourage learners to feel at ease, aiming for effective, honest communication that reflects authentic experiences. Ramis (2018) notes that humour is richer and more demanding than joking. Thus, with a relaxed atmosphere, learners could engage critically with interview questions and exhibit a courageous demeanour when speaking about issues of power.

Through dialogue, the various constitutive elements expressed above were harnessed in favour of critical reflection and agency development for this study. According to Freire (2021), dialogue creates a critical attitude, therefore, teachers are encouraged or required to develop their learners' critical thinking. If dialogue is used merely as a conversational approach to curriculum delivery, learners do not think critically about social justice issues and consequently remain incapacitated to address such issues in their lives. This is supported by Morris (2017) who states that critical dialogue is more than basic communication skills. It is an opportunity for learners and teachers to learn how to engage in civil, respectful, difficult conversations. For these reasons, Shih (2018) notes that teachers should construct learners' critical thinking ability in their teaching by using dialogue. Put simply, the educative power of dialogic teaching lies in teaching learners not *what* to think but *how* to think (Reznitskaya et al., 2009).

According to Reznitskaya et al. (2009), such a view of dialogue does not dismiss the authority of a teacher as a more knowledgeable partner in a discussion. Acknowledging authority based on teachers' expertise and experience should help to enhance dialogic teaching that is emancipatory and engaging rather than depositing knowledge into learners. The legitimate power of authority teachers possess in the classroom should also be negotiated to function as a facilitator, which would be to encourage the learners to open up to one another and understand that it is a safe space where their experiences and beliefs would be heard and respected by both their peers and their teacher.

3.2.1.4 Problem posing vs banking education

As expressed above, words should have a transforming power that is closely related to the experiences of learners. However, Freire (1970) notes that the outstanding characteristic of the teacher and learner relationship is narrative. The fundamental characteristic of this "narrative sickness" (Freire, 1970, p. 71) deems the teacher as a storyteller, alienating his/her teachings from learners' existential experiences, while learners are consequently characterised as meek listeners and reproducers of the narrated story in society (Nurjannah et al., 2022). Thus, banking education becomes an act of the teacher depositing knowledge in learners who are devoid of contributing to learning. Freire notes,

> This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store (1970, p. 72).

Like Freire, Nurjannah et al. (2021) critique this traditional process of banking education by stating that teachers become the subjects of knowledge and learners are rendered as meek objects, passive, and denied their freedom. This approach does not prepare or enable learners to make learning meaningful or relevant. It relies on a system that promotes uniformity and rote learning rather than embracing diversity and encouraging critical thinking. This approach is rigid and oppressive, as it fails to acknowledge learners' abilities and talents. Unfortunately, learning and teaching still occur in this manner, especially in South Africa, as studies (Hoadley, 2012; Corbett, 2021; Crookes, 2021) indicate.

The cited studies maintain that teaching styles and general classroom practice in South Africa are characterised by rote learning and teaching in which teachers are empowered as authoritarian figures and producers of knowledge. This is concerning as the drive for change in post-apartheid educational policy maintains that schooling should be founded on profoundly democratic principles (Palmer & De Klerk, 2012), rendering banking education counter-productive to emancipation discourse. The crucial point is that learners do not realise their potential to voice their ideas, since they are not provided with the power to do so (Khamratana & Adunyarittigun ,2021).

Contrary to banking education, this study uses problem-posing education for critical thinking in examining issues of power and social justice in the English Home Language

classroom and subsequently learners' life situations through the text, *Macbeth*. In so doing, this study raises the cultural existence of learners so that they become critically conscious of oppressive practices that have become a tool for dehumanisation (Khamratana & Adunyarittigun, 2021). Thus, learners' backgrounds related to culture, gender, language, social relationships, and socioeconomic identity, among others, are at the forefront of this study. Learners wereencouraged to reflect on what they learned from their real-life experiences with the central intention of laying down the roots for moral responsibility in wider democratic society outsidetheir classrooms (Giroux, 2010; Freire, 1970).

Problem-posing education is characterised as the construction of knowledge learned from real-life problems through critical thinking (Uddin, 2019; Gomez et al., 2021). For this study, I posed questions to learners about issues of power in the text, *Macbeth*, that could be examined through multiple lenses to draw out issues relating to learners' experiences of power. This enabled learners to reflect on what has been learned about the real world and their own experiences. This dialogical method facilitated problem-posing education as it allowed learners to critically reflect on solutions to power and social justice issues in their lives and wider society. Similarly, Khamratana and Adunyarittigun (2021) states that the teacher's role in problem-posing education is to facilitate critical discussion to form logical discourse.

By identifying problems in daily life, learners can create a link between the causes of problems and the will to transform them which is crucial for developing critical consciousness for a better life. Samuels (2018) encourages this by stating that true engagement and participation are increased when learners begin to see themselves in the educational context. When learners are engaged, they can critically analyse texts through their cultural lens and contribute to a deeper dialogue about issues they experience (Gomez et al., 2021; Freire & Macedo, 1995). Therefore, learners begin to read their world through the text, *Macbeth*. In so doing, teachers can contribute to creating an ethical, democratic, and equal society as highlighted by Mazdaee and Maftoon (2012) in which its citizens are aware of how important their ideas and beliefs are, as well as the knowledge of how these same ideas and beliefs may change society for the better. This method allows for self-reflection on the part of the learners as well as the teacher, something that banking education might have failed to do. By implementing this method in this study, the learners and I learn through each other by asking questions, presenting scenarios, engaging in dialogues, and establishing links with learners' worlds. Freire (1970, p. 80) notes that through dialogue that supports problem-posing

education, “the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach”.

It must be reinforced and understood that critical pedagogy aims to empower the learners and ultimately, through the learners, to empower the community. A problem-posing education will guide the learners and encourage them to be critical thinkers, allowing them to process information, assess its validity, and consider how they could make changes in their own lives. This form of education advocates for a change in society where learners become adults who are more conscious of their experiences, decisions, and the impact they have on their own lives as well as the lives of others.

3.2.1.5 Praxis

The above principles of critical pedagogy applied to this study enable praxis, which Freire (1970) refers to as both critical reflections on how to transform situations and circumstances, and the actions needed to accomplish it. Critical pedagogy understands the classroom as a location where new knowledge is produced through active engagement and dialogue. Thus, newfound knowledge and conscientisation are developed and grounded on the agenda of social justice by learners who are encouraged to draw on wider contexts outside the educational setting (Magee & Pherali, 2019). This method of curriculum delivery stands in opposition to the oppressive banking model of education, which is disconnected from the real-world experiences of learners.

The fundamental notion of praxis is the responsibility to act to create a more just world and not just study the world (Freire, 1970). The rejection of traditional approaches to education through praxis, according to Burke and Lumb (2018), is built on a commitment to social justice and creating change, recognising the importance of considering the social, political, and economic implications in the context in which it is enacted. In this study, the approach to praxis is underpinned by the assumptions that knowledge is highly contextual, different ways of knowing are equally valid, and knowledge is made, not discovered. This process is important and can be seen as enhancing community, building social capital, and leading learners to engage in actions that promote justice and human flourishing. Thus, in the process of attempting to mesh theory and practice, Shor (1987) believed that it pushes teachers toward becoming liberatory.

Teachers should consistently be mindful of the concept of praxis within the classroom. Learners should continually engage in reflection and action to rectify past injustices and

address present issues within their communities. To this end, Govender (2020) notes that Freire gives us the practical aspect that allows the emancipated norm of how society ought to be. The liberating power of praxis in critical pedagogy enables learners to interrogate and apply knowledge to transform society. It moves from the assumption that knowledge is static and true to the belief that knowledge is shaped through critical thinking, specifically through critical reflection and action, as Braa and Callero (2006) state that praxis moves beyond the classroom and connects with the community.

For this study, conscientisation among learners is not just to deepen understanding, but to invoke praxis. This implies that learners recognise their potential to act according to their new knowledge. Through a dialogical approach, learners engage with issues of power in their lives to develop informed action to challenge oppressive structures. Magee and Pherali (2019) argue that learners draw on their evolving knowledge, self-efficacy, and ability to revise their actions in a continuous cycle of learning and engagement. Praxis, therefore, in the English Home Language classroom, starts the process of learners harnessing their agency in addressing social injustices and issues of power in their lives so that they become effective citizens in the future. Ross (2018, p. 10) describes this type of learner as a "dangerous citizen" who possesses a mindset of opposition and resistance, rather than being a passive voter and follower. He argues that, through praxis, dangerous citizens pose a threat to an oppressive and socially unjust status quo, as well as to existing hierarchical structures of power. Therefore, the aim of society is the humanisation of all within society. In this envisioned society, both the formerly oppressed and the former oppressors would be emancipated through the process of humanisation. Furthermore, the nature of the praxis principle allows learners who were voiceless to develop skills, knowledge, and modes of inquiry to examine their role in society and to lead to their self-transformation.

3.2.1.6 Critiques

Critical pedagogy as a theory does have critiques and limitations in its application. By focusing on critiques and limitations, this study avoids shortcomings within the framework of critical pedagogy so that learners' lived experiences and knowledge are valued.

According to Darder et al. (2017), there is no set method for the implementation of critical pedagogy, and all conjectures, assumptions, and claims of truth are open to review. It is due to this broad application of critical pedagogy that Giguere (2016) critiques that it consistently fails to connect to a large number of teachers effectively in classroom practices.

Other scholars suggest that distinguishing critical pedagogy from other forms of active learning is becoming increasingly difficult (Fobes & Kaufman, 2007; Neumann, 2013). Consequently, a lack of understanding on the part of the teacher regarding what being critical entails and how to effectively incorporate critical pedagogy into the curriculum may lead to varied and ineffective practices. Gore (1993) critiques that there is a need for contextualised guidance for teachers or critical pedagogy may not be actualised as conceived (as cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003). Specifically, in terms of this study, contextualised guidance is provided to show how critical pedagogy underpins the teaching of the play, *Macbeth*, in the English Home Language classroom. However, literature concerning its application in other educational contexts is lacking (Giguere, 2016).

Furthermore, many teachers face real pressure in the classroom that impacts their job security, as pointed out by Neumann (2013). This pressure stems from mandated accountability demands that cannot be ignored and can leave teachers feeling subsumed by standardised testing. This contributes to understanding teachers' resistance to critical pedagogy's ideological implications as they fear it may hamper learners' results in tests and examinations. Thus, teachers commit themselves to traditional classroom practices (Giguere, 2016). For a teacher to effectively employ critical pedagogy in the classroom, they must first internalise and embody its principles within their practices and beliefs. A radical teacher acknowledges the diversity of their learners and recognises that learners can actively contribute to the creation of knowledge.

Among the first to take critical pedagogy to task was Ellsworth (1989, as cited in Foley et al., 2015, p. 121) who critiques the exclusivity and "opaque language" of critical pedagogy. This critique of critical pedagogy as a tool for oppression is ironic due to its discourses on emancipation and transformation of issues of social justice found in critical pedagogy. The central theme of their critique is that critical pedagogy is driven by male perspectives and holds a view of knowledge that is exclusionary to diverse cultures and gender, particularly that of feminism (Ellsworth, 1989; Foley et al., 2015). This elitist language may create additional oppression and requires a change to a more candid and plain language to issues of gender, culture, class, status, and race, among others, as Ellsworth (1989, as cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003, p. 6) claims that the term "critical" is a repressive concept that perpetuates relations of domination and hides issues of social justice. Moreover, Bowers (1987) states that Freire's pedagogy is based on Western assumptions and thus runs the risk of reinforcing Western values and assumptions.

The dialogical approach as an emancipatory tool of critical pedagogy is also critiqued by Bowers (1987) who claims that it "shifts the locus of authority from that of community and tradition to the individual" (as cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003, p. 7). In so doing, the idea of thinking critically for the transformation of social injustices is sometimes seen as indoctrination with a goal in mind. This is supported by Foley et al. (2015) who claim that once the teacher engages in a critical pedagogy that emphasises change and collective action towards transforming inequities, the teacher may be accused of indoctrinating his/her learners. This critique makes it clear that the role of the teacher when using critical pedagogy should be without bias and prescriptions.

Scholars like Lynn (2004) critique that critical pedagogy does not adequately incorporate issues of race and racism into its analysis of schooling and society. The racial blind spots of critical pedagogy have also been critiqued by Leonardo (2009) who claims that critical pedagogy needs to undergo a situation adjustment so that country-specific developments and issues may be examined.

Critical pedagogy is argued to be a movement that is normalised around a discourse that sees class as a determinant of social and political life while assigning race to a subordinate position (Allen, 2004). This implies that the challenge of race relations is primarily a concern for the White racial group, and it can permeate movements like critical pedagogy if not addressed directly. Critics also assert that those who come from a homogenous middle-class background and who have never had to struggle against injustices are ill-equipped to provide an authentic voice for social justice (Foley et al., 2015).

In this study, while attempting to apply critical pedagogy in a Grade 11 English Home Language classroom, the learners and I grappled with the limitations expressed above. Together with the learners, we engaged with and navigated the limitations through a dialogical approach that takes cognisance of learners' realities and their ability to construct teaching and learning strategies that resonate with their experiences. In diagram form, critical pedagogy could be represented as follows:

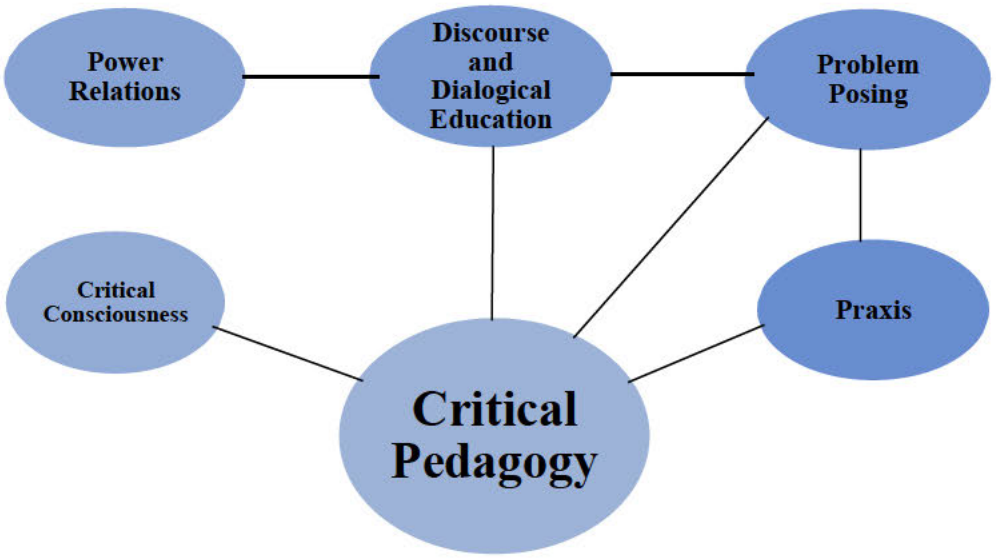


Figure 1: Critical pedagogy

3.3 Critical Literature Pedagogy

This study incorporates the text *Macbeth* as part of the endeavour to explore the dynamics of power in human relations. Consequently, CLP is applied as a theoretical lens. In so doing, the implications of the critiques expressed in the previous section of critical pedagogy may be reduced. CLP is a framework embedded in the ideas of critical literacy (a key component of critical pedagogy) that aims to understand and critique ideas in literary texts (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). According to Fajardo (2015), critical literacy is focused on examining the connection between literacy and power relations as a process of becoming conscious of one's experiences. In this process, dominant patterns of power and authority are brought to light that might have otherwise gone unnoticed and been passively accepted if the texts were taken at face value (Burnett & Merchant, 2011). This encourages readers to challenge the perception that a text is authoritative and final, aiming to eliminate an underlying belief that restricts the reader's ability to challenge, question, and deconstruct a text (Fajardo, 2015). Critical literacy teachers afford learners the opportunity to question, resist, and reconstruct textual representations that do not align with their own identities (Gainer, 2010). Thus, the combination of critical pedagogy and CLP applied in the teaching of plays such as *Macbeth* could become a new focus in literature pedagogy in ESL settings.

CLP weaves together two stances: "reading *with* the text and reading *against* the text" (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014, p. 124). The relationship between reading *with* the text and *against* the text is reciprocal. Learners read *with* the play chosen for this study to comprehend the storyline and interpret themes and characters. Typically, reading stops at this stance, which, while sufficient for most traditional standards and assessments, does not call into question the values and beliefs of learners and the values and beliefs embedded in the text. Reading *against* the text challenges learners to consider not only what is written but also what is not written that still accounts for the way the play works and how readers come to know and understand the world (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). Thus, reading *against* plays such as *Macbeth* means reading between the lines to expose and interrupt embedded, dominant narratives, power dynamics, and perceived normality espoused by and hidden in the play.

Similarly, McKenzie and Jarvie (2018, p. 298) compare the notion of reading against texts to a "resistant reading" approach. Their study seeks to advance critical literacy through literature in the English field, maintaining that readers need to take up a detective-like orientation to literature, treating texts as suspects. Secondly, resistant reading practices promote a specific set of affective orientations toward a text, asking readers to cultivate scepticism and vigilance. Thus, learners engage with the text of *Macbeth* through a resistant reading approach to open up new possibilities for surprising encounters when applying a conscious effort of their lived experiences to the text's representations of issues of power.

A Swedish study by Killgren de Klonia (2017) used two empirical web-based questionnaire surveys to examine how teachers and learners value certain criteria and aspects in connection to what literature is used in the class. She found that the participating teachers valued practical characteristics, such as the level of difficulty, more than conceptual characteristics, such as the sexual orientation of an author or character when choosing what literary works to teach. The results also show that both teachers and learners believed that critical and ethical discussions of the chosen works are very important in the classroom.

Similarly, Myers (2018) remarks that the purpose of English education is to inform learners of the influence of words, to empower learners' voices, and to engage those voices in the continual discussion about meaningful, relevant issues. Her study communicates ways in which meaningful discourse may be ushered into secondary English classrooms by employing the measures outlined by CLP and posits that it ultimately bolsters learners' capacities for counteracting social injustices through texts.

The studies above provide a starting point and a difference in the focus of this study. While the first study uses web-based questionnaire surveys to generate data, this study uses open-ended questionnaires, visual representation, and semi-structured interviews. Both cited studies (Killgren de Klonia, 2017; Myers, 2018) employ CLP, but the sociocultural backgrounds of the countries closely align with the text's socio-cultural contexts. In contrast, this study employs the Shakespearean play *Macbeth* in a post-colonial and post-apartheid South African English Home Language classroom context. Learners converge within this classroom space bringing with them diverse cultures, beliefs, and socio-economic experiences. This study ascertains the connection between events and characters in the play to learners' lived experiences regarding issues of power. Thus, by employing CLP as a philosophy, texts such as *Macbeth*, provide an especially effective position on how to transform individual classrooms from lifeless, rudimentary learning environments to fruitful academic spaces that are aligned to challenge issues of social justice.

Plunging deeper into the specifics of how to approach canonical literature through essential questions, the CLP outlines five primary areas on which to anchor the focus: canonicity, contexts, literary elements, reader, and assessments. In challenging learners to call into question each of these elements of a canonical text, which was done in this study, teachers inform a curriculum that "becomes not a static entity to be understood, appreciated, or simply regurgitated but rather an active process of meaning-making and dialogue, which stimulates meaningful learning" (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014, n.p.). Such learning, within the framework of CLP, is initiated by asking learners to contemplate issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*. Furthermore, essential questions not only ground the dialogue in analysing the text but also establish an understanding of how learners construct their beliefs about power in their lives and their agency in dealing with issues of power and social justice for a better future.

3.3.1 Canonicity

In South Africa, it is in schools that most people encounter Shakespeare (Lemmer, 2001). Shakespeare was introduced to South Africa during colonisation by the British, who utilised the plays as tools to disseminate English culture, language, religion, and values. Even when the British left South Africa, Shakespeare remained a force of oppression, this time weaponisedby the White supremacist apartheid government, which used Shakespeare to police morality and enforce conformity to conservative social norms, even going so far as to assign particular Shakespeare plays to schools for White learners and other plays to schools for African and

Coloured learners (Bloom & Bates, 2020). Thus, as debates about decolonising schools continue to rage in South Africa, Shakespeare's plays stand out for their historical implications of oppression.

Yet, despite growing debates surrounding Shakespeare's place in the South African educational context, his plays persist as a dominant feature in the South African Further Education and Training (FET) English Home Language curriculum. By applying CLP to the canonical literature of Shakespeare, particularly *Macbeth*, this study maintains that it is possible to challenge oppressive power structures head-on through Shakespeare just as one would with indigenous African texts. Furthermore, Bloom and Bates (2021) argue that Shakespeare's plays are not in and of themselves the root of the problem, and the vestiges of colonialism do not disappear when the colonial tool of Shakespeare is removed. By challenging taken-for-granted norms and values in the play, this study dislodges the colonial stronghold and renews the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, for a new approach in contemporary South Africa.

By drawing on Borsheim-Black et al. (2014), reading *with* the canonicity of the text, *Macbeth*, learners should call to question the merit of the play. This means that learners should consider the titles included in the canon of Shakespeare and the importance of their existence in the English Home Language curriculum. Learners also need to understand the global audience that the text reaches to grasp its value, as pointed out by Afifuddin and Kadarisman (2020). Specifically, in terms of this study, reading *with* the canonicity of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* does contribute to examining what texts are left out of the English Home Language curriculum and what is included.

Reading against a text's canonicity challenges this taken-for-grantedness by prompting learners to treat the canon as an object of examination (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). In doing so, learners scrutinise the perspectives presented in the text and reflect on their own perspectives regarding issues of power and social justice. Therefore, how learners read the text is as crucial as the choice of the text itself.

The concept of resistant reading, as mentioned earlier, aligns with the idea of reading against a text (McKenzie & Jarvie, 2018), and it is applied in this study as learners delve into the unintended consequences of studying the canon and its cultural values. The learners and I also grapple with the question of who benefits and who gets marginalised from the inclusion of this play. Engaging in dialogue with learners about issues of power and social justice, we also question the continued presence of the play in the English Home Language curriculum.

Considering canonicity from this stance reveals that no text is “sacred” (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014), and the cultural values of the play (*Macbeth*) should be closely examined and questioned. Thus, reading against canonicity emphasises that decisions about literature selection are not neutral. These choices are influenced by various factors, including curricular goals, personal preferences, available resources, and tradition.

3.3.2 Contexts

Reading *with* a text in this dimension often entails asking questions such as: how does the play reflect what was happening during the time it was set or written? And what was the social and political climate at the time in which this play was built? (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). It is also important to consider what was happening in the South African social and political context at the time the play was written. These questions enable learners to engage with the historical context of the text, *Macbeth*, in relation to the social circumstances in which Shakespeare created the play. Mellor and Patterson (2000) also emphasise the importance of learners examining the values the text might support, affirm, or oppose, and exploring the plurality of the text’s meanings.

By reading *with* the context of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Bristol (2011) argues that the notion of *cultural determinism* is an appealing approach for appreciating complex works. He also views context as the enabling conditions for understanding the relationship between an author’s work and a reader's competence. Learners read *with* the play to understand its cultural and historical context, aiming to bring embedded ideologies to the forefront of dialogues concerning power and social justice issues.

It was important to highlight to the learners that Shakespeare’s plays were originally created to be performed on stage to an Elizabethan audience. Boecker (2016) explains the significance of this, noting that Shakespeare's plays had to appeal to a broad range of social classes within the Elizabethan audience. Therefore, learners were guided to understand that Shakespeare's plays inherently addressed issues of social class.

This laid the foundations for learners to read *against* the text, as dominant ideologies of the context could be examined. Both of these notions press against what might be taken as normal from the text’s contexts (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). Through dialogue, the learners and I grapple with the author’s background in encouraging particular interpretations of the text and contemplate how the play would differ if someone of a different background had written it. In so doing, we needed to explore not only dominant understandings of these historical

contexts but also apply our cultural capital in interpreting the text. This enabled learners and me to detect that dominant ideologies are written into the very fabric of our society, which we often take for granted. One way of making dominant perspectives more visible is by juxtaposing them with contrasting perspectives (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014), which foreground voices of learners from non-dominant positions to challenge normative ideologies by telling a different side of the story presented in the play (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). To locate counter-stories (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014), learners draw on the context of their lived experiences of power and social justice issues in a South African setting to challenge ideologies presented in the context of the play (*Macbeth*). This interruption of dominant narratives in the play is supported by Borsheim-Black et al. (2014) as they claim that literary canons have typically privileged White and male voices, thus, counter-stories can make dominant ideologies visible.

3.3.3 Literary elements

CLP values the traditional approach to literary analysis. Close reading with attention to literary devices including character, plot, symbol, and theme has equated this approach to reading *with* a canonical text (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014). From this perspective, learners had to develop an understanding of the literary elements of the text *Macbeth* to familiarise themselves with key characters such as Macbeth, who is the protagonist of the play. Other characters had to also be identified so that their role in the play could be understood. This meant that discussions of the plot ensued in classes that questioned the conflict of the play and the character's actions in steering the plot.

In class, it became evident that learners grasped Macbeth's desire to become the King of Scotland, driven by a thirst for power. Learners also discerned that other characters, including Lady Macbeth and the witches, played roles in Macbeth's ascent to power and subsequent downfall. Consequently, conflict was examined to explore the development of characters through the course of the play. According to Borsheim-Black et al. (2014), when reading *with* the text's literary elements, learners need to identify the major plot points and themes. Learners recognised that the theme of power underpinned major plot points in the play and brought about discussions on social justice issues. These identifications by learners also contributed to the universality of the text as learners understood that power and social justice issues exist in today's society.

The reciprocal relationship of reading the play *with* and *against* literary elements is emphasised by Afifuddin and Kadarisman (2020) who claim that a traditional literary analysis should lead the way for learners to challenge dominant ideologies in the text. A traditional approach to literary analysis is where the studying of the text stops. However, CLP encourages reading *against* the text's major plot points, themes, and characters as Borsheim-Black et al. (2014) note that a text read uncritically could send messages about how the world works and learners could unconsciously reproduce such messages in society.

When reading *against* the characters in the play *Macbeth*, learners examined the relationship between characters, such as Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, by considering which character is marginalised, stereotyped, or a victim. Many other characters such as Duncan, Banquo, the murderers, and Macduff were brought into discussions that examined power and social justice issues. Borksheim-Black et al. (2014, p. 8) also encourage reading *against* the plot and themes to examine how they support or challenge normative ways of thinking about topics being portrayed and their role in supporting a certain belief system or what might be considered "normal". In doing so, learners contended with issues of power in the text by examining representations of gender, status, race, corruption, manipulation, and abuse, among others.

Thus, reading *against* the play's literary elements encourages learners to complicate seemingly natural messages the play conveys by calling into question the very aspects of literary analysis we so often take for granted.

Specifically, in terms of this study, learners compared their lived experiences to that of the major plot points and characters represented in the play, *Macbeth*. Learners drew on their cultural capital and experiences to critically think about the world through the play they studied in the English Home Language classroom by interrupting its potential to enforce culturally dominant ideologies about topics like power relations, gender, and class, among other power and social justice issues.

3.3.4 Reader response

The discussion of the above principles of reading *with* and *against* the play (*Macbeth*) paves the way for a reader-response approach which Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) note is the acknowledgement that a text does not have an objective, inherent meaning, but that meaning is negotiated in a reader's transaction with the text.

The hallmark of the reader-response approach was effectuated in this study as learners made personal connections *with* and *against* the text by drawing on their experiences of power and social justice issues through the play (*Macbeth*) as a catalyst. Learners engaged *with* and *against* the representations of power and privilege in the text through the principles of CLP to describe and raise the consciousness of how their experiences of positive or negative power related to the text for critical reflection and social transformation. Critical reflection gives readers the power to name and depict problems with the text which, in turn, reflects on problems in their lives. Through dialogue, learners were asked to determine which character they felt was powerful and to whom they could relate more in the play. This allowed learners to engage with issues of power on a personal level and exposed how the representations of power in the play shaped their knowledge of power.

For learners to read *with* their personal connections, it was crucial to focus on specific events and characters rather than the entire play, as Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) highlight that personal connections are most effective when they align with the text.

Similarly, CLP also encourages learners to look for opportunities, when appropriate, to read *against* their connections, and to consider how aspects of their own identities, especially their positions of power and privilege, factor into their experiences with a play. Borksheim-Black et al. (2014, p. 9) posit questions to help guide learners and teachers to read against the play with their personal connections such as "how does my identity in terms of race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, language, or religion shape my reading of this text?" Also, "how do/don't I relate with characters in power or with marginalized characters in this text? How might this positionality shape my reading of the text?"

These questions assisted this study in understanding learners' responses to issues in the play and illuminate the value of selecting Shakespeare's play taught to learners in a South African setting.

3.3.5 Assessments

Studying literature in the English Home Language classroom often leads to an assessment in the form of a literary essay. In most cases, assessments focus mainly on reading *with* the text's literary elements (Lemmer, 2001). Learners might be asked to interpret the text by characterisation and thematic analysis which could contribute to the normalcy and neutrality of the dominant ideologies in the text.

An *against* stance toward literature assessment encourages teachers to design assignments that position learners as agents of change by setting up opportunities for them to transfer their critical reading of the play, *Macbeth*, to some type of critical reflection and possibility for social transformation. In this way, CLP asks learners to engage with literary texts for both academic and "real-life" purposes, emphasising the value their analyses have beyond the classroom (Borksheim-Black et al., 2014, p. 11).

CLP allows teachers of canonical literature to become effective enablers of active citizens through assessments and dislodges the banking method of education (Afifuddin & Kadarisman, 2020). Thus, teachers need to develop the ideas in reading *with* and *against* canonical texts such as *Macbeth*, to inform, persuade, or educate learners about oppression and injustice holistically. This means that assessments should align with the principles of critical pedagogy and critical literature pedagogy. Furthermore, learners' interpretations of canonical texts should be used to understand, draw attention to, and interrupt dominant and problematic perspectives in communities, including the school (Borksheim-Black et al., 2014)

In so doing, Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) claim that by applying CLP to assessments, learners could be able to see why and what canonical literature can mean for contemporary, local, and global worlds they live in and helps provide learners with a purpose for the work we ask them to do in literacy classrooms. This notion bridges the disconnect between content and real-life experiences that many learners feel in their educational journeys, particularly when studying Shakespearean texts, as reinforced by Afifuddin and Kadarisman (2020) who claim that the distance between the learners and the context of the literary canons in the English Home Language classroom can be a space for CLP as a new pedagogical approach that closesthe distance. By utilising their identities in responding to assessments, learners not only develop critical thinking skills to analyse other texts but also produce ways in which they can effect change in their communities.

3.3.6 Critiques

CLP often looks for ways to empower learners to overcome oppression and effect change when reading canonical texts, but there are limitations to this framework. Paul (2001) critiques the reader-response approach by stating that relying too heavily on reader-response can overemphasise the importance of relating to a text at the expense of examining power and difference. This can lead to learners feeling alienated from the events and characters represented in the text. Critical thinking in this regard is not stimulated when learners simply

respond that they do not relate to any aspect of the text. Instead, readers could have more productively considered what the play had to teach them about a perspective other than their own. Alternatively, emphasising how they did not relate to the text could have helped them reflect on their own lives differently.

Afifuddin and Kadarisman (2020) also note that the dimensions of reading *with* and *against* a text in CLP require careful planning, especially for classes with large numbers of learners. The dimensions of CLP may or may not exist in the literary competence of learners. Therefore, teachers need to ascertain the level of experience, reading exposure, and socio-cultural background of each learner before effectively applying CLP. This could delay effecting the principles of assessments in CLP as teachers may not be confident to set assessments outside of the literary elements for fear of learner failure.

Furthermore, Afifuddin and Kadarisman (2020) note that the dynamics of classes vary concerning learners' literary competence, and as such, CLP lacks a formulaic method to apply its principles in multiple settings. Similarly, Bishop (2014) states that the broadness of its application relies on replications of other studies due to the non-existence of a narrow methodology of its dimensions.

Despite being theorised as an emancipatory theory of learning, researchers (Bishop, 2014; Blackburn & Clark, 2007; Phelps, 2010) have consistently demonstrated that critical literacy, which underpins CLP, may be limited when attempting to take social action to redress political inequities and injustices within the context of school-based literacy curricula. Phelps (2010) claims that even when learners considered socio-political, cultural, and ideological issues that could lead to possible action steps, they frequently did not act if they were not explicitly supported to do so. This prompts Bishop (2014, p. 58) to argue that this limitation is both systemic and diffuse, and points directly to the question of "where can critical literacy learning be authentically exercised?" The present study could serve as the starting point in the lives of learners in developing a raised consciousness of issues of power through studying the play, *Macbeth*, as a catalyst with the possibility of enacting change, resisting oppression, and championing an equal and just society in their communities and society at large. In diagram form, CLP could be represented as follows:

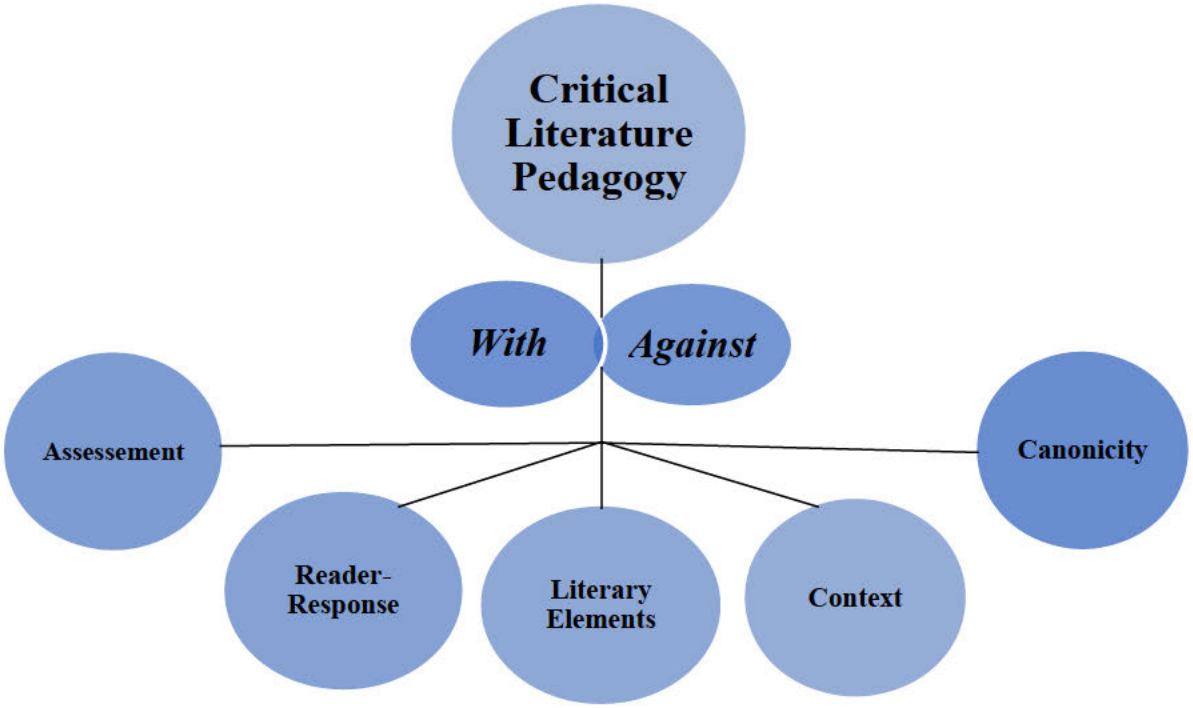


Figure 2: Critical literature pedagogy

3.4 Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literature Pedagogy in Teaching the Play, *Macbeth*

This study utilised the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy and CLP as frameworks to adeptly instruct the play *Macbeth*, serving as a catalyst to explore learners' lived experiences of power and issues related to social justice. Both frameworks enabled critical reflection and development of agencies for social transformation through a raised consciousness of the representation of issues of power in the text to real life. Thus, the oppressive banking model of education was dislodged from the English Home Language classroom practice to pave the way for a democratised approach to teaching and learning. Thus, in diagram form, critical pedagogy and CLP in this study could be represented as follows:

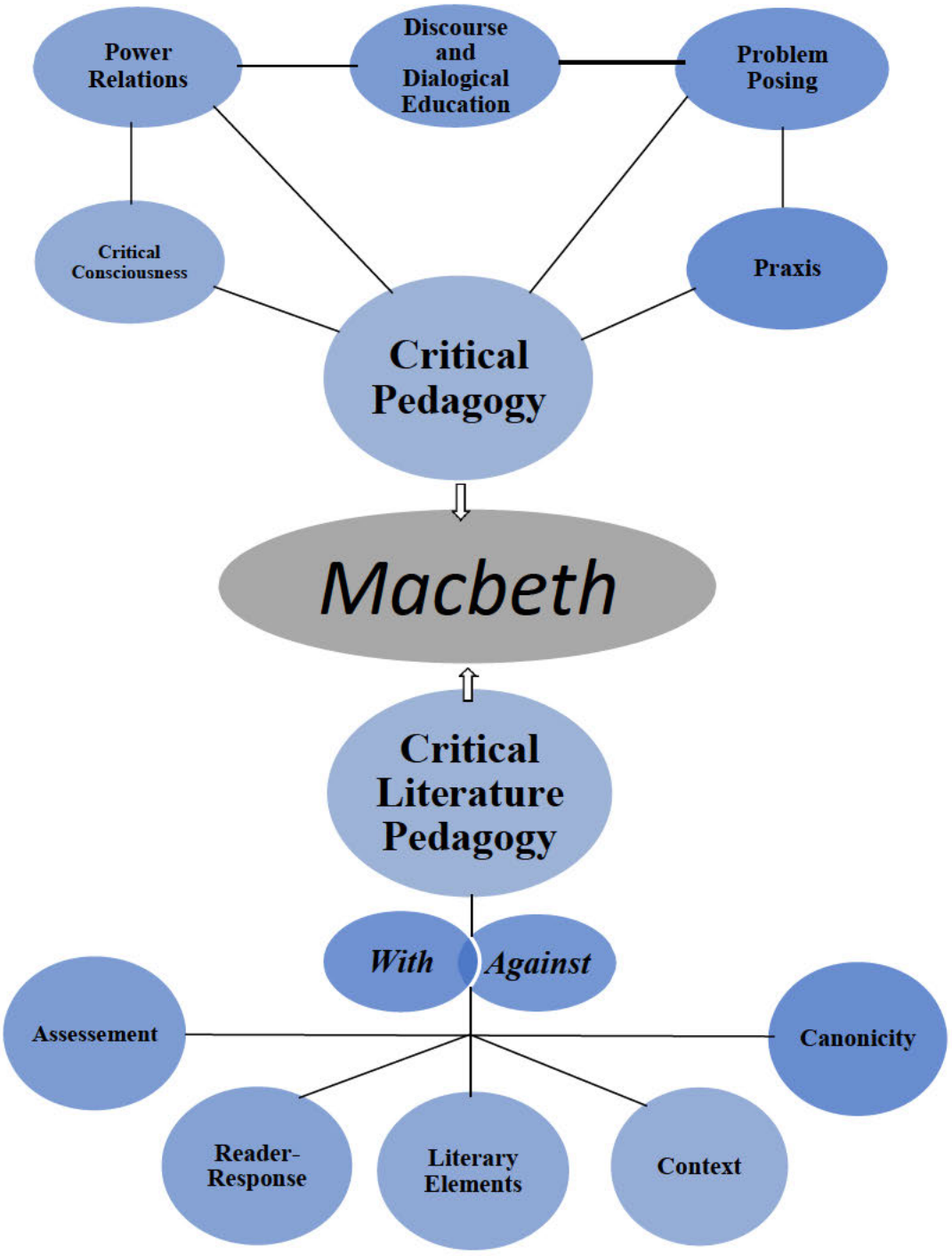


Figure 3: Critical pedagogy and CLP to teach *Macbeth*

Guided by a credible body of literature in examining the principles of critical pedagogy and the dimensions of CLP, this study posits a new approach to teaching the play, *Macbeth*. The

diagram above could serve as a useful tool for teachers who are open to using a similar approach to teaching the play, Macbeth, or other Shakespearean texts in their English Home Language classrooms.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the theoretical framework underpinning this study. One of the theories applied to this study is critical pedagogy, which emphasises critical consciousness, power structures and relationships, dialogic and problem-posing education, and praxis. These concepts are rooted in Freire's (1970) ideas on education, and they were adapted to suit the context of the present study. This study also reinforced CLP as a second framework developed by Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) which is embedded in the ideals of critical literacy. CLP enabled this study to examine reading *with* and *against* the text's canonicity, context, literary elements, reader response, and assessments.

The next chapter will offer a comprehensive account of the research methodology employed in this study, encompassing the method of data production, participant selection, and adherence to ethical principles. Additionally, matters concerning trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations will be addressed as necessary.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical framework underpinning this study. Attention now shifts to a detailed exposition and justification of the research methodology that was employed. The chapter begins with a delineation of the research paradigm, followed by an elucidation of the research approach and the chosen research design aimed at achieving the research aims. Thereafter, the chapter addresses the sampling and recruitment of the participants, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations adhered to in this study. The methods for data generation and analysis are expounded upon, including an elucidation ofhow trustworthiness was ensured throughout the study. Additionally, the limitations of the methodology are acknowledged.

4.2 Research Paradigm

According to Kuhn (1974, as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), the term "paradigm" was initially coined to describe a philosophical way of thinking. It defines a researcher's philosophical orientation, and this has significant implications for the assumptions related to the ontology, epistemology, and methodology decisions of the research process. Kuhn (1974, cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) also argued that a paradigm signifies a conceptual framework shared by a community of researchers, providing them with an accessible model for examining problems and finding solutions.

In educational research, the term paradigm is used to describe a researcher’s worldview (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the worldview is the perspective or thinking that informs the interpretation and meaning of research data. Paradigms are thus important for researchers in particular disciplines because they influence what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Since this study aimed to explore and understand the social realities within the experiences of different learners, this study falls within the *interpretivism paradigm* (Cohen et al., 2007). The interpretivism paradigm enabled this study to provide insight into how learners

make meaning or sense of situations that they encounter in their social context (Maree, 2007). The first assumption of the interpretivism paradigm in this study presents a relativist ontology that assisted by maintaining that the nature of reality is subjective, multiple, and socially constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lee & Krauss, 2015). In other words, learners' experiences of issues of power as a phenomenon differed based on how they perceived their encounters in their social contexts, thus maintaining that there is not one objective real world. Epistemologically, the interpretivism paradigm questions the knowledge and experiences of participants in conjunction with their social contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, the emphasis on learners' social contexts in this study was crucial for interpreting and deriving meaning from the data. The data emerged from the lived experiences of individuals situated in various and similar social contexts, encompassing school and community environments, socio-economic and political factors, age, emotions, culture and values, language, and other relevant factors. In employing the interpretivism paradigm, the intricate layers of learners' understanding of power as a phenomenon were fully interpreted. This study utilised a naturalist methodology within the interpretivism paradigm, incorporating semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and a visual task. Throughout the data generation process, I assumed the role of a participant observer (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

According to Schwandt (2001), the interpretivism paradigm presents two different views of meaning. The "meaning of an action" is the first view described by Schwandt (2001, p. 153). This view resides within the consciousness of the actor, and it was understood by Schwandt (2001, p. 154) "in terms of the actor's intentions". The second view is "action has meaning" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 154). In this study, the learners served as the actors, and their responses were presumed to be intentional and uninfluenced by preconceptions. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration and interpretation of learners' understanding and experiences regarding issues of power in their lives. The study integrated the perspectives advocated by Schwandt (2001), ensuring both the freedom and natural evolution of the generated data, while maintaining openness to new knowledge throughout the study.

The application of the interpretivism paradigm significantly facilitated interaction between the learners in two English Home Language classes and myself. This approach provided valuable insights into how learners engage with issues of power in their lives through the teaching of the play, *Macbeth*. The interpretivism paradigm was deemed appropriate due to its inherent strengths, as outlined by Cohen et al. (2007) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). This paradigm facilitated close collaboration with the learners, and I was fully involved in the data

generation and analysis. Furthermore, according to Dodgson (2023), the interpretivism paradigm is useful to analyse the human mind on how individuals construct their social reality on crucial issues such as those that manifest from the phenomenon of power in human social relations. Similarly, Morgan and Kunkel (2007) added that there is a need to understand the social world from the standpoint of the individual. Hence, the interpretivism paradigm enabled this study to discover learners' various and unique experiences of issues of power in their social contexts.

The interpretivism paradigm's controversial position, as argued by Cohen et al. (2011), is acknowledged. They note that the interpretative position aims to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in a complex context rather than generalising it to other domains, which can leave gaps in the validity of the results. Given this critique, this study recognises that it focuses on the engagements of two Grade 11 English Home Language classes with the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*. However, this play is taught in other English Home Language classrooms in South Africa. Therefore, exploring the phenomenon of power and investigating issues of power and social injustices in the context of other learners' lives in different educational domains could provide valuable insights.

Tuli (2010) critiques the interpretivism paradigm by arguing that interpretivism tends to be subjective. Therefore, it is often contradictory in explaining social phenomena. For this study, learners shared various responses about their subjective experiences of power as a social phenomenon, and whilst responses differed, it was embedded in an engagement with issues of social justice.

4.3 Research Approach

Given the nature of the research questions in this study, a qualitative approach was employed. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research is an approach that aims to understand people in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people attribute to them. In this regard, the qualitative approach was suitable for this study as learners in two Grade 11 English Home Language classes interpreted and brought meaning to issues of power as a phenomenon through engaging with the play, *Macbeth*. Also, Nyaruwata's (2013) claim aligns with the above statement as she notes that the purpose of a qualitative approach is to understand human behaviour and their experience better from the participants' perspective. As such, learners' views included their feelings and

subjective thoughts concerning their engagement with issues of power, as Cohen et al. (2011) note that human beings create their understanding of situations.

From the discussion above, it is clear that qualitative research aims at a real-life inquiry that describes and analyses individual social behaviour, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions, whereby the data is generated through prolonged interaction with participants (Nyaruwata, 2013). For this study, I taught two Grade 11 English classes the play *Macbeth*, and three data generation instruments were applied to ensure a prolonged and sustained interaction to arrive at a deep understanding of learners' engagements with issues of power in their lives. Furthermore, by being directly involved in the data generation process and teaching of the play (*Macbeth*), I was able to understand the social context of the learners so that I could understand the phenomenon from their perspective, an idea supported by Asghar (2013) who claimed that qualitative researchers must have an adequate understanding of the phenomenon as well as the social context of the participants.

According to Queiros et al. (2017), through the submergence of the qualitative researcher in the social context of the participants, the researcher inevitably becomes part of the society, resulting in an adequate understanding of their experiences. The assertion by Queiros et al. (2017) held significance for this study, serving as a reminder to consistently uphold respect and mindfulness toward learners' cultural norms, beliefs, traditions, ideas, and emotions as these emanated from their experiences within their social contexts. Through a deliberate process of deep consideration, empathetic perception, and the suspension or bracketing of my preconceptions about issues of power under discussion, the study aimed to derive meaningful data, minimising bias as much as possible from my perspective (Oancea & Punch, 2014).

From the discussion above, it is evident that qualitative research does not seek to analyse numerical or measurable data as done by quantitative researchers (Creswell, 2009). In contrast to a quantitative approach, this study depended on documenting personal accounts of learners, providing detailed illustrations of how they perceived and responded to issues of power in the play *Macbeth*, and subsequently in their social contexts. This documentation was achieved through spoken and written words as well as an illustration.

In consideration of the limitations of a qualitative approach particular to this study, Ochieng (2009) claims that the findings are difficult to generalise with the same degree of certainty as compared to a quantitative approach, especially since qualitative research takes place with a small sample. Whilst the reproducibility of learners' responses to the phenomenon

of power may differ depending on the social context of other samples, the common factor was that the play (*Macbeth*), which is taught in other schools, could be taught in a way that develops learners' critical thinking skills to engage with issues of power in their unique social contexts.

A potential limitation of a qualitative approach, as indicated by Hammarberg et al. (2016), is that a researcher might become biased, as they may immerse themselves in the social context of the sample, feeling a sense of belonging to that particular social context. To mitigate this risk of researcher bias in presenting the results, I remained mindful of the research objectives and sought to achieve trustworthy results by adhering to the structure of qualitative research. In addition, Hammarberg et al. (2016) emphasise the importance of aligning the data with its interpretations to avoid biased results, a consideration that was also taken into account in this study.

4.4 Research Design

For this study, I used phenomenology as my research design. According to Christensen et al. (as cited in Pathak, 2017, p. 1719), phenomenology is fundamentally concerned with the "explication of the meaning and essence of the lived experiences" of a person or a group of people around a specific phenomenon. In this study, the lived experiences of learners in two Grade 11 English Home Language classes were explored focusing on the phenomenon of power by using the play, *Macbeth*, as a catalyst. By applying a phenomenological research design to this study, I attempted to understand learners' perspectives and perceptions of power regarding human social and political relations. Drawing on the ideas of Speziale et al. (2011), phenomenology was employed in the present study to clarify the nature of being human, expand awareness about power as a social and political phenomenon, and foster human responsibility in the construction of realities.

Phenomenology, which was developed in the 20th century by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, is rooted in "the belief that knowledge based on the universal effort to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning of structures, of the lived experiences" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 10). Therefore, a phenomenological research design is well-suited to facilitate a renewed awareness of the elements that surround us (Cohen, 1987). Often, we overlook many aspects of our daily experiences simply because they have become commonplace. This approach diverges from other disciplines in that "it attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 11).

Moustakas (1994, p. 48) defines ‘lifeworld’ as “the way a person lives, creates, and relates to the world”, representing the realm of immediate experience. In the context of the present study, learners’ everyday lives constitute a distinct personal world, even when they share common social contexts. This uniqueness stems from their varied experiences and interpretations, particularly in relation to issues of power. Learners in this study constructed their lifeworld based on their experiences of the phenomenon explored in this study.

Husserl (as cited in Churchill & Wertz, 1985) contributes another key principle to phenomenological design through the exploration of the concept of 'intentionality.' This principle seeks to elucidate the consciousness underlying lived experiences, encompassing perceptions, imagination, expectation, remembering, as well as thinking, feeling, and social behaviour. This study intended to understand the reasons behind learners’ experiences and how they interpreted those experiences. According to Mancuso and Tonelli (2014), humans have varying ways of relating to their experiences, and as such, the concept of intentionality emphasises that all modes of experiences are not lived in a very explicit way. This study therefore sought to make learners’ recollections and interpretations of experiences about issues of power in their lives more explicit and less arbitrary through face-to-face interaction and dialogical practices.

Another key quality of a phenomenological design is the idea of *reduction*. According to Christensen et al. (2017, p. 117), the idea of reduction requires “bracketing” (*epoche*), emphasising a shift away from my personal experience of the phenomenon to focus on the lived experiences of the learners in this study. In line with Groenewald (2004), this form of bracketing ensured that I refrained from imposing my preconceptions and experiences onto the individuals’ lifeworlds. Instead, I adopted the role of a seasoned interpreter, allowing the experiences of the participants to shape the investigation into issues of power.

For this study, the learners’ subjective experiences of power in their lives were identified as devoid of presuppositions and biases to explore and describe the phenomenological essence objectively. Moreover, phenomenological reduction resolves to suspend impressions, conceptions, or beliefs surrounding the truth or accuracy of the phenomenon in question. This approach facilitated an open and unbiased exploration of the full range of conscious experiences from the learners. As noted by Christensen et al. (2017), the exclusion of my preconceptions and experiences of the phenomenon was not intended to alter the individual's experience but rather to perceive it in a fresh and unencumbered light. Zahavi (2003) claims that the exploration and description of a phenomenon, free from

preconceptions and biases, could make the researcher adjust long-held views, subsequently attaining a deeper understanding of the learners' experiences and their truths.

In keeping with the idea of reduction, it is imperative to note that the play, *Macbeth*, was taught to learners as a catalyst to engage with issues of power in their lives. The representations of issues of power in the play were not fundamentally meant to be paralleled with issues of power in their lives. This corroborates Pathak's (2017) claim that the phenomenon cannot be understood through representations of the phenomenon but rather through the meaning individuals give to their lived experiences of the phenomenon.

Acknowledging the constraints inherent in a phenomenological design, Tuffour (2017) contends that participants might encounter challenges in effectively conveying the subtleties of their experiences. The richness of data, he suggests, hinges on the communication skills shared between participants and the researcher. Tuffour goes further to assert that the exclusive reliance on individuals with a high level of language fluency can render phenomenology an elitist design (Tuffour, 2017). To address this critique, the present study not only employed written and spoken data generation methods but also incorporated a visual task to corroborate and complement the obtained results. Furthermore, I maintained an openness to interpreting metaphors and lived stories expressed by the learners. This approach served as a means of exercising heightened attentiveness, aiming to generate rich and exhaustive data that encapsulated the depth of the participants' experiences.

Tuffour (2017) also argues that phenomenological research seeks to understand lived experiences but does not explain why they occur. This study attempted to overcome this criticism by ensuring that an inquiry was made into the conditions that triggered the experiences of learners, which are either in past events, histories, or social-cultural and politicaldomains.

4.5 Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

"Sampling involves making decisions about which people, setting and behaviour one wishes to make use of for the research" (Lakens, 2022, p. 21). Bhardwaj (2019) defines sampling as a procedure that selects a group of people from a large population to obtain accurate and representative results. Further, Obilor (2023) posits that sampling is a technique of selecting a representative part of the population to ascertain the characteristics of the whole population. Therefore, the sample can be considered as "a portion of a population" (Etikan et al., 2016, p.

1). Accordingly, Cohen et al. (2011) claim that the quality of data and results is greatly dependent on the sampling procedure.

For this study, *purposive sampling* was used, which is a type of *nonprobability sampling*. According to Bhardwaj (2019, p. 161), "Nonprobability sampling is a type of sampling where each member of the population does not have a known probability of being selected in the sample". In other words, it is a technique used based on the researcher's preference and access to the selected sample of the study (Obilor, 2023). Specifically, the sampling technique used for this study was not random as I selected learners from two Grade 11 English Home Language classes that I taught which ensured prolonged contact of one year.

Etikan et al. (2016, p. 3) explain that purposive sampling is conducted when the researcher has selected participants with specific criteria for the study through the "identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest". For this reason, purposive sampling is also known as subjective or judgement sampling. In this method, the researcher exercises discretion in selecting a sample to acquire in-depth knowledge about a specific phenomenon, rather than making statistical inferences. This approach is particularly suitable when dealing with a small and highly specific population (Obilor, 2023).

Given that I instructed the play, *Macbeth*, to the participating learners, I knew that the phenomenon of power and issues of power could be addressed during the teaching of the play. This awareness rendered them suitable participants for the study. As Maree (2007) notes, the sample chosen because of certain characteristics and the specific information they hold about the study. Thus, I selected learners from two Grade 11 English Home Language classes who were willing to provide me and the study with accurate data.

In addition to the aforementioned criteria guiding the use of a purposive sampling technique in this study, I drew on the insights from Bhardwaj (2019) and Obilor (2023). They emphasised that this approach not only enhanced accessibility to the sample and saved time, as data could be generated from well-informed participants, but also positioned itself as a cost-effective sampling technique. This assertion held validity in the context of this study, as significant expenses were not incurred in the data generation process, since the participating learners were from the classes I taught.

This study followed Laerd's (2012) guidelines for identifying and recruiting the sample group. According to Laerd, the researcher should initially identify the target participants. Subsequently, the researcher needs to acquire a list of participants and, finally, contact all

participants to gauge their willingness to participate (Laerd, 2012). The recruitment of participants was done by requesting the two Grade 11 English Home Language classes that I taught to be a part of a research study that I was conducting for my Master of Education degree. They were then told that the study related to the play, *Macbeth*, which they were studying. At this stage, learners showed great eagerness to become research participants as they smiled and made positive remarks, indicating their willingness to participate.

Due to the nonprobability nature of purposive sampling, the technique comes with drawbacks, notably the potential exclusion of population members who could have made valuable contributions to the study (Obilor, 2023). Obilor (2023) claimed that the researcher is prone to manipulations, biases, and errors in the sampling technique. In this study, careful consideration was given to the acknowledged limitations of purposive sampling. It was recognised that the Grade 11 learners who were not selected as participants for this study (187 learners) might have provided additional insights into the dynamics of power experienced through studying the play, *Macbeth*. Moreover, it was imperative to eliminate any biases and presumptions of the two classes that I taught so that I could articulate their responsesaccurately.

The sample selected for this study consisted of two Grade 11 English Home Language classes that I taught out of a total of eight Grade 11 classes. I do not teach the other classes. The two classes were, namely, Grades 11 A and 11 D. Grade 11 A consisted of 25 learners, and 11 D consisted of 30 learners. Thus, the total number of all participating learners from both classes was 55, resulting in a total sample of 55 out of 242 Grade 11 learners at the high school. To present a full picture of their responses, multiple pseudonyms were created.

From the demographical information of the sample, the ages of the two classes ranged between 16 years old and 18 years old. Of the 55 learners, 22 learners were 16 years old, and 28 learners had already turned 17 years old, which was the expected age of learners in Grade 11. Only five learners were 18 years old, which was over the expected age at this level.

Thus, the pie chart below represents the age demographics of the sample for this study.

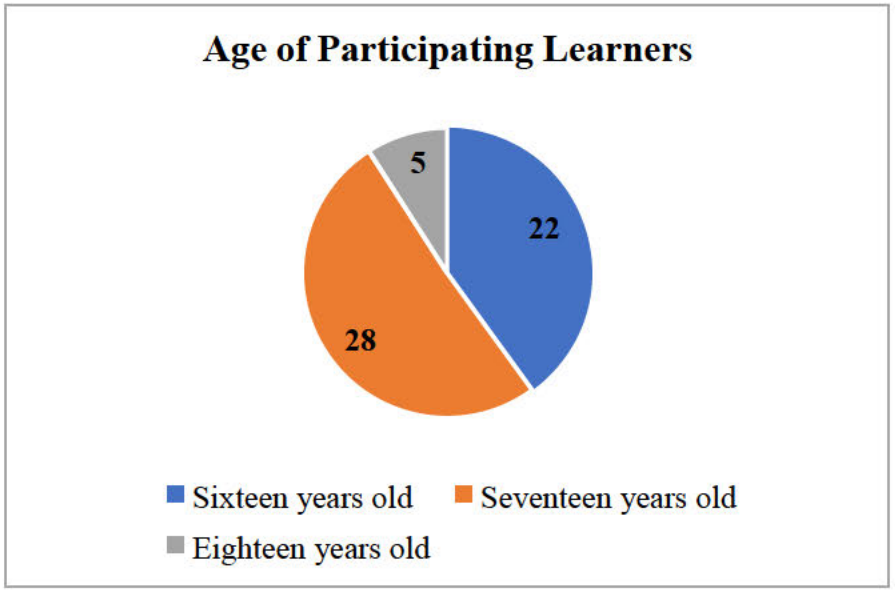


Figure 4: Age of participating learners

The gender profile of the total sample of 55 learners consisted of 36 females and 19 males, as indicated in Figure 5 below.

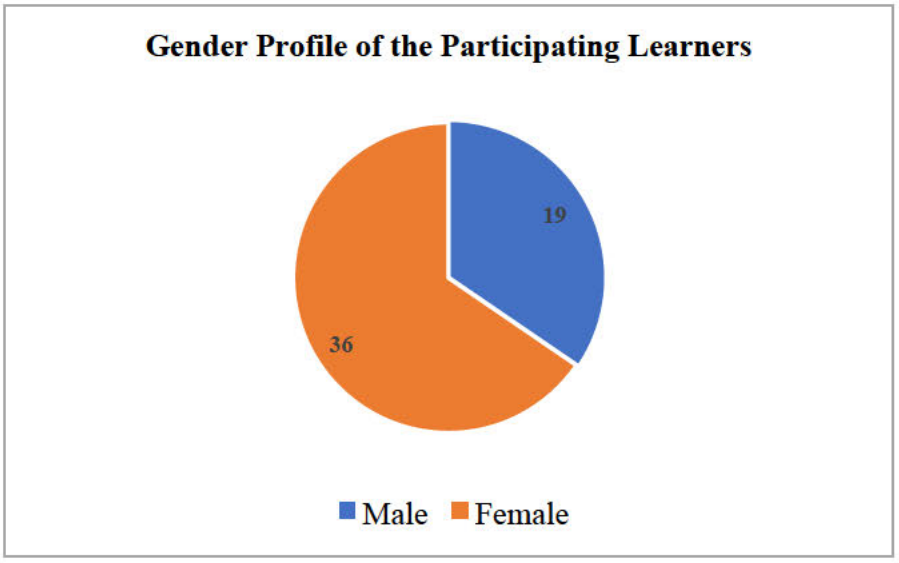


Figure 5: Gender profile of the participating learners

The racial demographics of the total sample for this study consisted of 52 Black learners and three Indian learners, as shown in Figure 6 below.

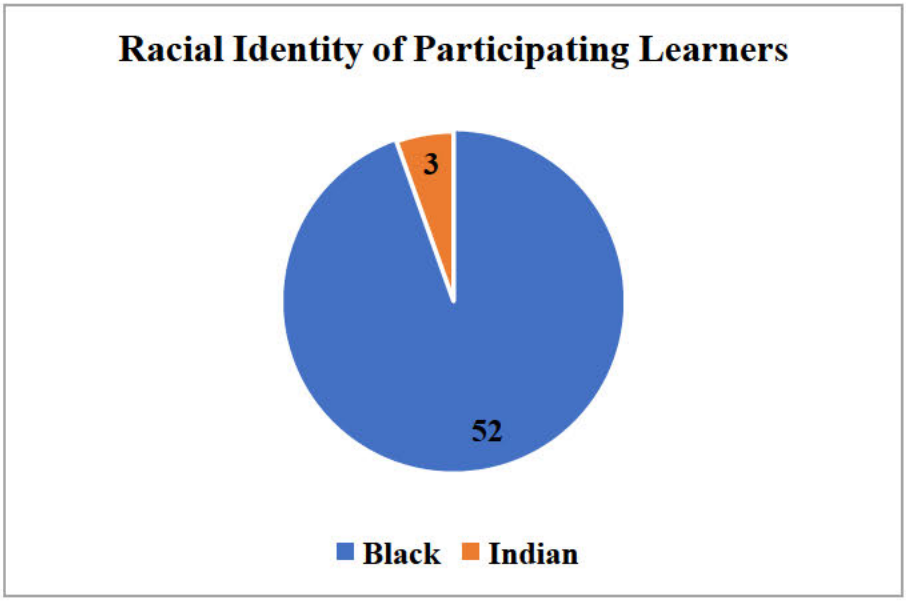


Figure 6: Racial identity of participating learners

All learners who indicated their participation in the study responded to the open-ended questionnaire and visual task. Learners were asked to approach me if they felt willing to be a part of the semi-structured interviews. The first five learners from 11 A and 11 D were selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were sampled using convenience sampling.

Convenience sampling is a type of sampling where the first available primary data source will be used for the research without additional requirements (Obilor, 2023). In other words, this sampling method involves getting participants wherever you can find them and typically wherever is convenient. In convenience sampling, no inclusion criteria were predetermined before the selection of subjects. The advantages of utilising convenience sampling in this study were evident in the quick and easy data generation process, as there were no stringent rules or criteria for selecting the sample, aside from the close accessibility of participants (Obilor, 2023). Due to its minimal demands in terms of effort, cost, and time, along with its straightforward operation, convenience sampling proved beneficial for both this study and the researcher (Golzar et al. 2022).

Scholars have contended that the social context of participants in a qualitative study, such as the one conducted here, plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting data (Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Maree, 2007). Therefore, in addition to the previously mentioned characteristics of the sample, it is important to reiterate that the participating learners in this study reside in low-income and impoverished areas. Consequently,

their socio-economic contexts significantly influenced their lived experiences, perceptions, feelings, and ideas regarding issues of power in their lives.

4.6 Ethics, Gatekeeper Approval, Informed Consent and Informed Assent

The current qualitative study delved, to some extent, into sensitive and intimate aspects of learners' lives, necessitating a careful consideration of ethical concerns throughout the research process. Kushwaha and Dube (2023) describe ethical considerations in qualitative education research as an analysis by the researcher of what is right and what is wrong, with the primary goal of upholding the dignity, rights, and welfare of the participants. Moreover, according to Oswaldo (2021), the likelihood of achieving accurate and fair research results is higher when the research is conducted ethically throughout the qualitative research process. Ethical dilemmas considered in this study revolved around principles such as autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence, which will be elaborated on in the subsequent paragraphs.

I sought to attain the gatekeeper's permission from the principal of the public high school where the data were generated. The principal was given full knowledge of the process to be followed, how the learners would be involved in the study, and at which times they would be required to participate. The gatekeeper also had full knowledge that this would not impact their work or pose any threat or harm to the learners in any way. He also understood that the learners would be allowed to withdraw from the study at any point.

Following the completion of the gatekeeper's permission document, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (see Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter). I was able to generate data from the participating learners. First, the completion of informed consent and assent forms was carried out. It was my responsibility to ensure that the participating learners had the freedom to choose whether or not to be involved in the study. They were therefore furnished with information regarding the nature of the study and what their role would be through informed assent documents (See Appendix C: Informed Assent Letter), carefully tailored to suit the reading level of the learners. This approach was taken in line with Cohen et al.'s (2011, p. 52) assertion that participants should possess complete "comprehension" and be fully informed about the study being conducted, ensuring that the vulnerable are protected and allowed to feel empowered through the study. Furthermore, Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) asserts that participants should have full information about the study's objectives and their roles in it. The

information sheet played a vital role in fulfilling Aluwihare-Samaranayake's (2012) recommendation.

The information sheet also made the participating learners aware of their autonomy in the study. According to Reid (2022), autonomy refers to the participating learners' capacity to think, decide, and act freely and independently in the research process. Learners were explicitly informed that their participation was voluntary, and they retained the right to withdraw at any point. This approach ensured the utmost respect for the learners, as the study was free from coercion or undue influence that might have led them to believe their English Home Language subject scores were at risk if they chose not to participate. Throughout the study, the participating learners were treated as autonomous individuals capable of deliberating on issues of power in the play (*Macbeth*) and in their lives without any interference or manipulation of their responses. This approach aimed to ensure the accuracy of the results.

Reid (2022) also points out that some people in society may not have the capacity to make fully informed decisions about what they do or what happens to them; therefore, their autonomy is compromised. For this study, it was important to attain permission from the legal guardians or parents of all participating learners who were below the age of 18 years old. Permission was obtained from the parents/guardians using informed consent documents, which outlined the nature of the study and the participating learner's role in the study (See Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter).

This study also considered the ethical principle of beneficence. Oswaldo (2021) suggests that researchers should aim to maximise the benefit of the research and minimise the potential risk or harm to the participants. Considering the ethical principle of beneficence, it was my responsibility to inform the learners that they could benefit directly through the study as they could experience additional exposure to the play (*Macbeth*), which formed part of their examinations. Moreover, as learners critically engaged with issues of power in their lives from social and political perspectives, they developed a greater understanding of issues that impact their communities, families, and other micro relationships. This study was also beneficial to me as it served as an insightful assessment tool that provided insight into the way I taught the play to Grade 11 English Home Language learners.

To safeguard against any potential psychological harm to the participating learners, they were informed of the availability of the school guidance counsellor. This reassurance was provided in case they experienced any psychological or emotional responses stemming from their participation in the study.

Furthermore, the public high school expressed a commitment to escalate cases to local child welfare services if any such situations arose. Although such cases did not manifest during the data generation process, it was crucial to communicate this to the participating learners. This information aimed to reassure them, creating an environment where they felt protected and secure in sharing their experiences and perspectives on issues of power in their lives. The above considerations fell under the ethical principle of non-maleficence or that a good effect must be intended by the study without causing any harm to the participants (Oswald, 2021; Reid, 2022). Furthermore, the participating learners' identities were protected by generating pseudonyms for responses. Thus, the diagram below illustrates the ethical considerations of this study:

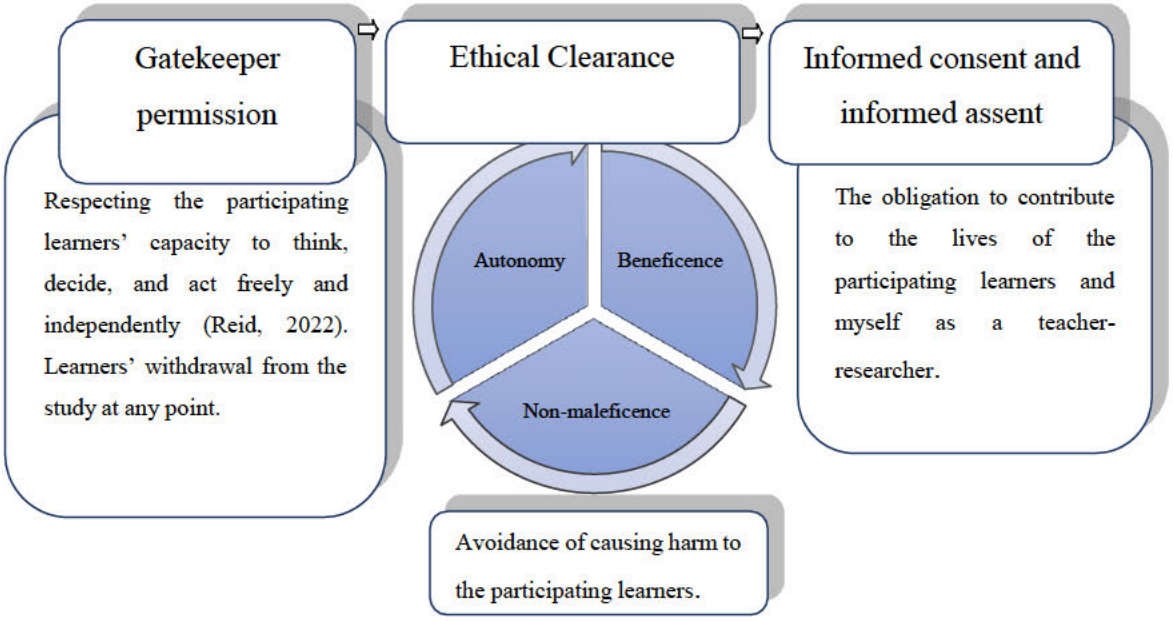


Figure 7: Ethical considerations adhered to in the study

At the end of the study, the participants were provided with feedback from the study. To build a relationship of trust between myself as the teacher-researcher and the participating learners who would be taught by me in their Grade 12 English Home Language classes, feedback from the study was important. During the teaching stage of the play (*Macbeth*), and the data generation stage of the study, learners were involved in critical discussions, debates, and questions about issues of power. Thus, the feedback sessions took place in the English Home

Language classroom of the respective grades in which I presented the research findings to the learners and facilitated clarity-seeking discussions about issues of power and social justice.

4.7 Data Generation Strategies

The data for this study were collected through three methods: an open-ended questionnaire, a visual task, and semi-structured interviews, conducted in this sequence. Employing these three data generation methods provided the opportunity to elicit a diverse range of responses from the participating learners, thereby ensuring the cross-verification of information.

4.7.1 Open-ended questionnaire

The first data generation method that was completed by the participating learners was the open-ended questionnaire (See Appendix D: Open-ended Questionnaire). Gillham (2000) argues that open-ended questions can lead to a greater level of discovery. This was made possible as I ensured that the phrasing of questions was precise, unambiguous, and in accordance with the reading level of the learners (Richards & Schmidt, 2014). Moreover, Desai and Reimers (2018) highlight that open-ended questions are constructed rather than suggested by response options, thus avoiding bias. This principle was upheld in the development of the open-ended questionnaire for this study. Popping (2015) observes that open-ended questionnaires request participants to generate their responses, enabling the researcher to document the opinions of the respondents in their own words. He added that responses are spontaneous and provide the researcher with all subtleties and nuances participants may imply (Popping, 2015). The same can be said for the participating learners in this study, as they were given an opportunity to answer questions in their own words, free from any restrictions about what they could write, unlike closed-ended responses. The participating learners were free to provide examples and contexts to expand on to clarify their answers which were far more descriptive than closed-ended responses.

The anonymous open-ended questionnaire was designed to respond to all three research questions. The questions first sought to understand how learners recognised and understood issues of power in the play (*Macbeth*), which led to them exploring their beliefs about the phenomenon of power in their lives. Hyman and Sierra (2016) claim that participants should have adequate time given to them to complete open-ended questionnaires so that they can write as much as they would need to provide a wide range of answers. After the teaching of the play

(*Macbeth*), the participating learners were given an open-ended questionnaire to respond to in one of the English Home Language classes, lasting one hour. This allowed them to critically reflect on issues of power in the play they had been taught and, subsequently, to reflect on issues of power in their lives, adding useful information in an anonymous space.

Acknowledging the limitations of the open-ended questionnaire used in the study, as noted by Desai and Reimers (2018), who suggest that such questions may discourage participants with lower levels of literacy from expressing themselves in the written form, potentially leading to unanswered questions and limiting the depth of certain responses. To mitigate this concern, the open-ended questions in this study were formulated to align with the reading level of the participating learners. Additionally, the participating learners were encouraged to seek clarification on any questions they found challenging to understand. They were also encouraged to present their ideas free from intimidation or embarrassment based on their use of spelling and grammatical conventions being scrutinised or judged as the content of their responses mattered more than poor spellingand grammar.

Hyman and Sierra (2016) also contend that participants may not always feel comfortable expressing their true feelings in open-ended questions, making it challenging for the researcher to interpret such information accurately. They may also write very short and vague answers where the researcher would have expected extensive details (Hyman & Sierra, 2016). To address this limitation, the researcher employed more than one data generation method to ensure comprehensive data collection. Pseudonyms were assigned to each questionnaire upon their collection by the researcher.

4.7.2 Visual task

To understand learners' experiences and beliefs about issues of power they saw or experienced in their lives, the second data generation method used was an anonymous visual task (See Appendix E: Visual Task). The visual task was used to discover the embedded knowledge of the participating learners and sought to respond to RQs 2 and 3.

Kearney and Hyle (2004) highlight that investing time in a drawing task can engage participants, fostering increased interest and involvement in the activity. Vince (1995) further suggests that drawing serves as a catalyst, aiding participants in articulating deep-seated feelings and beliefs about the phenomenon being explored. Glaw et al. (2017, p. 1) state that "visual methods enhance the richness of data by discovering additional layers of meaning,

adding validity and depth, and creating knowledge". This method was also used with the participating learners as conventional methods "might be off-putting for many respondents, particularly children" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 337) or young people.

The visual task was introduced to the participating learners the day following their completion of the open-ended questionnaire. They were given the task to complete within the full duration of one hour of their English Home Language class in which they were also made aware that their drawing could take the form of a picture, mind map, speech bubble, or collage, and that they could use any stationery item they had. They were also encouraged to include a brief description of what their drawings represented so that I did not misinterpret their intended meanings. Lyon (2020, p. 9) describes this method as the "draw-and-write" technique, which entailed that the participating learners first draw and then be asked to write a few words about their drawing. She also claimed that the "draw-and-write" technique was beneficial as it enhanced a greater degree of participant intimacy with the drawings and enabled other relevant meanings to be identified and explored beyond the formal concept being understood (Lyon, 2020).

The only limitation of using the visual task as a data generation tool was that some of the participating learners did not possess adequate knowledge of the phenomenon of power and, as such, found difficulty in visually representing issues of power in what they saw and experienced in their lives. To address this concern, learners were encouraged to seek clarity on the challenges they experienced in completing the task. After addressing some of the challenges the learners experienced, they were able to produce a visual representation comfortably. Pseudonyms were assigned to each visual task upon their collection by the researcher.

4.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

The final data generation method was semi-structured face-to-face interviews that addressed all three research questions (See Appendix F: Interview Schedule). I interviewed 10 learners individually in a classroom without any other learner present so that they felt comfortable sharing their responses. The semi-structured interviews were held with learners during their break which they willingly attended. I verbally requested their permission to record their responses, which was granted by all 10 participating learners. The semi-structured interviews were recorded on a digital audio recording software that also transcribed the actual spoken words of the participating learners. The transcribed interviews were verified by simultaneously listening to the audio and reading the transcripts to ensure accuracy. The length of the

interviews ranged from eight minutes to 18 minutes. Each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym.

Zohrabi (2013) posits that semi-structured interviews are more flexible when compared to structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were not too rigid or too open, which ensured that the data generated contributed to the purpose of this study and enabled the participating learners to explore their perceptions and experiences about the phenomenon of power with freedom. Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021) emphasise that semi-structured interviews facilitate the generation of detailed information through a conversational approach. This required me, as the interviewer, to be sensitive, poised, and well-informed about relevant responses. Such an approach allowed me to pose follow-up questions effectively in order to extract richer data from the participating learners. Adams (2015) suggests that the same questions need to be asked to all the participants. However, the order can change based on the relevant substantive issues that arise. The same can be said about the semi-structured interviews that were conducted in this study, as some responses were vague and needed an explanation from the learners.

Cohen et al. (2011) note that using semi-structured interviews is advantageous in that the participants answer similar questions, thus mounting comparability of responses. The semi-structured interviews enabled me to first extract participants' meanings and how they create a sense of issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, by drawing on their understanding and recognition of powerful characters, issues of leadership among Duncan and Macbeth, issues of gender in the play, and lessons they had learnt about power from studying the play, among other aspects. Learners' responses to the questions above were probed so that I could discover the reasons behind their choices, beliefs, and thoughts.

Adams (2015) notes that it is important to create a relaxed environment, listen carefully, avoid interrupting the participant, and be respectful and sensitive to the emotional state of the interviewee. This was important, especially when learners spoke about issues of power in their lives which formed the second set of interview questions. Learners were queried about both their positive and negative experiences related to power, their perceived influence in various aspects of their lives, reflections on whether similar issues in the play mirrored societal concerns, self-perceptions as leaders, and their sense of control over people and situations in their lives, among other inquiries.

According to Kakilla (2021, p. 2), semi-structured interviews assist with the generation of authentic verbal data from learners by "observing non-verbal responses such as hunches,

laughter and silence, to reveal hidden information". By making observations of non-verbal responses from learners, I was able to ascertain if learners were comfortable when speaking about sensitive issues, and I could also ascertain, through gestures, the possible truthfulness of responses.

In addition to the above advantages, the interviews were conducted in a relaxed and conversational manner. This approach provided an opportunity for both learners and myself to address any misunderstandings that emerged from the way the questions were designed.

The interview method, however, had its disadvantages. For example, the participants were at first reluctant to freely give their views for fear of victimisation. To curb this shortcoming, I reassured the participants of confidentiality to enable them to share their experiences of issues of power. As a result, the learners responded freely to the questions, leading to the generation of more data. This approach facilitated an understanding of how their experiences impacted them and provided insights into the reasons behind these experiences. It was crucial as I aimed for the learners to conclude the interview with a heightened critical consciousness of their experiences and feeling empowered as potential agents of change.

Another disadvantage of using semi-structured interviews was identified by Kakilla (2021, p. 4) who states that poor or limited knowledge of the phenomenon, together with language barriers, could result in "data loss" and even "kill the conversation". At times in the interviews with learners, it was evident that the conversation was diminishing due to learners lacking the verbal ability to fully express their experiences and beliefs about an abstract phenomenon such as power. Hence, as the interviewer, it was crucial for me to pose probing questions, provide contextualisation, and occasionally adapt the questions spontaneously. This involved maintaining the question's intent while ensuring it was more comprehensible to the learner. Adams (2015) emphasises that the interviewer has the prerogative to determine the level of flexibility in the interview, guided by the responses of the interviewee.

Overall, the employed data generation methods enabled learners to provide their subjective views on the issues of power that they experienced in their lives, leading to a deeper understanding of the construction and truths about power as a phenomenon in social and political domains. Thus, the chosen data generation methods aligned with the choice of phenomenology as a research design, facilitating the exploration of the full range of conscious experiences among the learners.

4.8 Data Analysis

This study found it necessary to utilise two methods of data analysis. The first method was a textual analysis, and the second was a thematic analysis.

4.8.1 Textual analysis

This study included a textual analysis of the play, *Macbeth*, which was used as an integrated portal to explore the phenomenon of power that learners recognised through events and characters that emerge from the text.

According to Kusch (2016), textual analysis is an argument that expresses a writer's perspective, interpretation, judgement, or critical evaluation of a particular literary work. In this study, the play *Macbeth* was analysed through the theoretical lenses of critical pedagogy and CLP. McKee (2001) claims that there is no way a text can be interpreted accurately without considering the context of the text and the audience meant to interpret it. Shakespearean plays, including *Macbeth*, were meant to be acted on stage to an audience and not studied through texts in classrooms. "The context (that is, a series of intertexts – related texts) is what ties down the interpretations of a text" (McKee, 2011, p. 11). Therefore, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was critically analysed to understand how power remains relevant in the lives of today's audience through themes that express power in human social relations.

The textual analysis of the play sought to illuminate the underlying context and social context of power as it is represented through characters and events. The textual analysis served as the foundation for the study and was done before engaging with the participants in the study.

The play, *Macbeth*, was analysed as a data source by unearthing themes such as ambition for power, power in gender identity, the corruption of power, power leading to guilt, and positive power. The above themes that were generated from the textual analysis were analysed to give way to responses from learners and to understand their recognitions and perceptions of issues of power in the play.

4.8.2 Thematic analysis

4.8.2.1 Thematic analysis – explanation

According to Javadi and Zarea (2016, p. 34), *thematic analysis* is a method for the "extraction of meanings and concepts from data and includes identifying, examining, and recording patterns or themes". Majumdar (2022) claims that thematic analysis helps create a rich, detailed, as well as complex account of the data set. Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 57) point out

that the method of thematic data analysis "is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities". The present study applied the thematic analysis approach to the data set comprising of the open-ended questionnaire, visual task, and transcripts of the semi-structured interviews. Javadi and Zarea (2016) posit that a theme is a kind of agreement that, in comparison to the main text in which the theme is extracted, is more concise, accurate, simple, and shorter. In other words, themes are important points regarding the research data and show a pattern or meaning related to the data set (Saldana, 2021).

4.8.2.2 Two levels of theme identification

Majumdar (2022, p. 202) argues that the "decision of theme identification majorly revolves around two levels of themes". He calls the two levels of theme identification the *semantic level* and the *latent level* (otherwise known as the *interpretive level*) (Majumdar, 2018). Thesemantic approach is used when the data are analysed at an explicit or surface level where theanalyst is not looking beyond the statements delivered by the participants of the study (Majumdar, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2012). In contrast, the latent approach is used when data are analysed at a much deeper level of the content. For the present study, I analysed the data atboth levels, considering the explicit words and images first and then moving onto the latent level, which involved identifying and examining the underlying meaning, idea, content concept, and ideologies of learners' responses in the data set. Jnanathapaswi (2021) indicates that in the latent level of analysis, the interpretive work is much deeper and more rigorous andnot only involves description but is also justified with the theoretical framework.

4.8.2.3 Six steps of data analysis

The thematic data analysis in this study was conducted through six steps, as espoused by Braun and Clarke (2012), namely:

1) Step 1 – Familiarisation

The first step was to become familiar with the data by reading the information from the participants. This was done through an "active immersion", which involved reading and re-reading the data to search for the possible meaning, patterns, and coding themes.The more I read the data, the more I was led to greater discoveries, and it was at this point that I knew that the data needed to be analysed at the latent level as implicit meanings

were evident. It also became evident that as the reading proceeded to multiplere-readings, the content of the data began to surface, and the analysis process simplified.

I began to take notes of important responses from the learners, which helped me become more acquainted with the data in preparation for the second step.

2) Step 2 – Generating codes

The second step involved generating initial codes. According to Majumdar (2022), initial coding helps to identify the data features that serve as elements of the raw data or information that can be analysed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon. The initial codes generated at this stage enabled me to manually and systematically group the learners' responses according to similar questions they were asked in each data generation instrument. This step also considered the claim made by Javadi and Zarea (2016) who state that the use of margin notes could be used to name codes. This was done by writing codes next to each response which allowed for a full and meaningful picture of the patterns produced by the data.

3) Step 3 – Generate themes

The third step was to generate themes. Javadi and Zarea (2016) suggest that the themes are sought from the codes. At this stage, I already had an extensive list of codes which made the process of generating themes easy as I collated similar codes under a named theme. Majumdar (2022) states that it is important at this stage to organise the codes in a meaningful way that addresses the theme. I sought to combine similar codes so that I could combine them to form a theme. At this stage, I generated central themes and grouped miscellaneous data, including blank responses in the open-ended questionnaire.

4) Step 4 – Review the themes

The fourth step involved reviewing the themes. According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), this step is based on two principles regarding the characteristics of the generated themes, which are internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. *Internal homogeneity* means that the researcher should check if the data inside the themes are meaningfully related to each other and address the respective theme under discussion. Conversely, *external heterogeneity* refers to the researcher's ability to organise the diversity of data so that each theme contains different contents (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Terry et al., 2017).

5) Step 5 – Defining and naming themes

Upon reading the data under each theme, I realised that some data did not fit under the same theme, which resulted in generating more themes. This is closely linked to the next fifth step, which involves defining and naming themes. Once a clear thematic map was developed, I began phrasing the names of each theme. The naming of themes was done with the intent of summarising the scope and content of the data within each theme in a clear, accurate and evident way that transfers to the reader quickly (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

6) Step 6 – Write up

The final step entailed compiling the write-up of the findings within each theme. This step was done by including a descriptive and evaluative discussion that sought to justify the selected themes and how those themes were related to the research topic and questions (Majumdar, 2022).

The thematic data analysis method proved fitting for this study, given its capacity for an in-depth interpretation that extends beyond the surface of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach enabled an analysis of learners' responses beyond the phenomenon level, incorporating an understanding of the social context of their everyday lives. In addition, Majumdar (2022) observes that the thematic analysis method is well-suited for novice researchers as it does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge required by other qualitative approaches.

According to Majumdar (2022) and Braun et al. (2014), thematic analysis can be a time-consuming and exhaustive process. It involves repeated readings of data, breaking down data extracts, and continual reviewing of themes before commencing with the discussion offindings. Additionally, Braun et al. (2014) note that while the flexibility of thematic analysis is a strength, it can at times pose a challenge for analysts in determining which aspect of the data requires focused attention.

To mitigate the challenge of thematic analysis being a time-consuming and exhaustive process, I implemented a strategy of setting specific deadlines. This approach allowed me to immerse myself in the data systematically, organising it into specific themes before engaging in the discussion of findings. By the steps of a thematic analysis method, it became clear that its flexibility emphasised that careful coding of the data was imperative before creating themes.

A thematic analysis of the data did align with the decision of a phenomenological

research design as it ensured that the naming and organisation of themes derived from learners' perspectives and perceptions of power.

4.9 Storage of Data

In accordance with the university's regulations, the data will be securely stored for a period of five years in a locked cupboard. Following the conclusion of this timeframe, the data will be incinerated, and hence disposed of in an ethical manner. Throughout the study, the data were carefully stored in a locked cupboard and only accessed when necessary, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines.

4.10 Trustworthiness

Creswell (2014) argues that qualitative studies are usually not based upon standardised instruments, and they often utilise smaller, non-random samples, which can be said for the present study. Thus, in addressing and understanding the significance and interpretation of a phenomenon, qualitative studies do not make use of instruments with established metrics about validity and reliability, which makes the task of establishing trustworthiness in studies complex. The first sub-section below explains what is meant by reflexivity, followed by the next sub-section which unpacks the criteria of trustworthiness.

4.10.1 Reflexivity

Anney (2014, p. 279) emphasises that "trustworthiness in research should assess the authenticity of findings in qualitative research". Hammarberg et al. (2016, p. 499) highlight that the research process needs to be viewed as "ethical, important, and intelligibly described" by using "the appropriate and rigorous methods". An important consideration in this section is *reflexivity*, which is described by Haynes (2012, p. 1) as

> [A]n awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes.

In other words, and in terms of this study, I had to examine and critically reflect on how my own beliefs, judgements, and practices during the research process may have influenced the research.

4.10.2 Trustworthiness criteria

To ensure trustworthiness in the present research, particular attention was given to the criteria of *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and c*onfirmability* espoused by Guba and Lincoln (1985). These are described in more detail below.

4.10.2.1 Credibility

Drawing on the ideas of Stahl and King (2020), credibility in qualitative research refers to the researcher's confidence in the truth of the study's findings. It involves ensuring that the participants' views are congruent with the researcher's representation of them. In essence, credibility serves as a criterion for establishing the truth and accuracy of the researcher's findings. Korstjens and Moser (2018) add that credibility also determines whether the conceivable data drawn from the participants' original data accurately reflects the participants' original views.

To establish credibility in this study, I consistently engaged in personal reflexivity throughout the research process. According to Olmos-Vega et al. (2023), personal reflexivity entails researchers reflecting on and clarifying their expectations, assumptions, and both conscious and unconscious reactions to contexts, participants, and data. Thus, my participation in the study was a significant aspect to be analysed. Given that I have been teaching the play *Macbeth* to Grade 11 learners for six years, I have acquired substantial knowledge about issues of power within the text. This familiarity facilitated the ease of drawing on examples and events from the text during classes. Upon reflection, this familiarity was viewed as a positive aspect of the research process.

I was able to facilitate discussions and debates about issues of power in the text, which led to posing questions to learners about issues of power in society. Olmos-Vega et al. (2023) contend that participating in a personal reflexive exercise can be a powerful learning experience, capable of reshaping a researcher's practices and catalysing other forms of change. In this regard, I sought to bracket my prior personal experiences of the phenomenon of power when generating and interpreting the data so that I could learn about the participating learners' unique experiences and assess the effectiveness of the way the play, *Macbeth,* could be taught in my future practice. Therefore, the responses of the participating learners were presented verbatim, aligning with the approach advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They emphasise that responses should be gathered through various methods, including the inclusion of verbatim

quotes from participants. This practice aids the researcher in supporting the interpretation of the responses. I did acknowledge that I had expectations of how learners could respond to issues of power they identify in the play as this was taught during classes, but I tried to remain completely open to learners' personal experiences.

Patton (2002) asserts that studies relying solely on one data generation method are susceptible to errors such as researcher bias and inaccurate responses. To mitigate these risks and ensure credible findings in this study, the method of triangulation was employed. This involved utilising three data generation methods: an open-ended questionnaire, a visual task, and semi-structured interviews. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 141) define triangulation as "the use of two or more methods of data collection". By having learners respond to the same questions through various methods, the data could be corroborated, thereby enhancing the reliability of the findings. The use of three methods also ensured that learners had the opportunity to respond in ways that suited their cognitive capabilities. The diverse forms of data generated comprehensive answers to the research questions, contributing to increased credibility and confidence in the findings of this research.

4.10.2.2 Transferability

The second criterion of trustworthiness that was considered in this study was transferability, which refers to the ability of the research to be applied in various contexts and should yield results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Nowell et al. (2017), qualitative research does not and cannot aim for replicability, yet qualitative researchers maintain that patterns and descriptions from one context may apply to another. Thus, as the play, *Macbeth*, has been prescribed for Grade 11 English Home Language learners, the findings in this study could therefore relate to many other learners and teachers within the South African context. After all, Stahl and King (2020, p. 27) state that "it is valid and important to create new knowledge from emergent discovery-oriented qualitative research, and it is also productive to seek understanding from others' systematic qualitative inquiry".

This study also ensured a thick description, defined by Stahl and King (2020) as the inclusion of explicit contextual information about the fieldwork site, details of responses (in this study, I used quotes from learners), and interpretations of findings. However, it's important to recognise, in qualitative studies, that truth is multiple, relative, and subject to change, but that it nevertheless remains the truth. Time and contextual variations may lead to different

findings even when employing a similar sample, methodology, and context (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). This may be a challenge in other qualitative studies due to their subjective nature.

4.10.2.3 Dependability

The third criterion of trustworthiness is dependability, which refers to the study providing sufficient details for other researchers to understand, learn from, and apply the study elsewhere to yield results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Merriam (2015), dependability is problematic and impossible as human behaviour is not static, not always logical, and changes persistently, relying upon different affecting variables. Whilst Merriam's (2015) assertion posits a challenge to the dependability of this study's findings, the theoretical framework used to teach the play, *Macbeth*, is dependable, as it posits rigorous conceptual understandings that could be used in similar classroom settings to expand on the phenomenon.

4.10.2.4 Confirmability

Lastly, the criterion of confirmability is described as a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped and supported by the generated data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the data used were returned to the participating learners for auditing, allowing them to confirm the authenticity of their words. This level of transparency upholds the integrity of the study. Furthermore, my biases were acknowledged through critical reflection throughout the research process, as mentioned earlier. Stahl and King (2020) concur with the idea of critical reflection, as it allows the researcher to account for the findings of the study. Moreover, through thick descriptions, the reader can determine the confirmability of the study.

4.11 Limitations of the Methodology

Like any research undertaking, this study is not without its limitations, and this section aims to acknowledge them. One notable limitation pertains to the instruments employed, specifically the absence of demographical information about the participating learners. The instruments did not prompt for details such as age, race, and gender. While the school database supplied demographical information for the two Grade 11 classes, the discussion of the findings did not account for the demographics of the participants since this information was neither explicitly

requested nor provided by the participants. It is therefore not clear if the provision of such information from the participants would have changed the data generated.

The nature of self-reporting can be defined as a method that involves asking participants about their feelings, attitudes, and beliefs (Pekrun, 2020). For this study, learners who participated in the semi-structured interviews were, at times, reluctant to reveal private details about issues of power they experienced, even though probing questions were asked to delve deeper. This could have been due to the reason that I was their teacher, and they were not comfortable enough to reveal sensitive details. Another reason explained by Chung and Monroe (2003) could be that learners wanted to appear more socially desirable by refraining from speaking about their experiences that could have cast them in a negative light.

Two out of the ten interviewed learners requested to redo the interview as they felt more comfortable and thus provided richer and thicker data the second time. Thus, the data generated from the other eight interviewed learners could have been richer if they felt comfortable with providing more detail about their experiences. In retrospect and even though learners volunteered to be interviewed, perhaps a less intrusive data-generating instrument could have been used.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study successfully generated sufficient data to comprehensively address the research questions.

4.12 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an understanding of how the research for this study was conducted. A qualitative research approach was chosen, which was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm, as I wanted to gain insight into how the play, *Macbeth*, could be taught as a catalyst for learners to engage with issues of power in their lives. The criteria of trustworthiness applied in this study were also discussed, as well as ethical considerations that were adhered to during the research process. As far as possible, I have provided motivations for the research choices made in this study. By employing a phenomenological research design, learners' subjective perspectives and lived experiences of power prevailed and were thematically analysed.

In the next chapter, I will endeavour to explore issues of power in the play under study, *Macbeth*, by presenting a literary analysis of the text to set up a deeper understanding of the learners' responses in the chapter that discusses the findings.

CHAPTER 5

LITERARY ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology that was employed in this study. The purpose of the current chapter is to provide a literary analysis of the phenomenon of power in the play *Macbeth*, presented under the following premises: *Ambition for power: "the golden round"; Power in gender identity: be "bloody", "brave" and "bold"*; *Corruption of power: "I am in blood stepp'd in so far"*; *Power leading to guilt: "out damned spot"*; and lastly, *Positive power: "our power is ready".*

As a tragedy, *Macbeth* is a dramatisation of the psychological and political repercussions of unbridled ambition. Shakespeare tells the story of a Scottish nobleman (Macbeth), consumed by ambition to become king and by the consequences of the acts he commits to achieve his goal.

At the beginning of the play, Macbeth and fellow general Banquo meet three witches who deliver prophecies to both: Macbeth will be the thane of Cawdor. Macbeth would be king of Scotland, and Banquo will father a line of Kings while not becoming king himself. Encouraged by Lady Macbeth, his ruthless wife, Macbeth kills king Duncan. After his murder, since his heir Malcolm and his brother Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, Macbeth is crowned king.

Consumed by guilt, Macbeth becomes a tyrant as the play progresses. He resorts to murder to maintain his power as king. He murders Banquo and Macduff's family after the prophecies of the witches. Macduff had gone to join forces with Malcolm to defeat the tyrant Macbeth. Macduff and Malcolm raised an army aimed at dethroning Macbeth.

Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth, who initially was more assertive than her husband, has become consumed by guilt to the point of insanity and eventually kills herself.

At the end of the play, Macduff manages to vanquish Macbeth and the play ends with Malcolm crowned king of Scotland.

5.2 Literary Analysis

5.2.1 Ambition for power: "the golden round"

Ambitious individuals seek to excel in their chosen pursuits, driven by the desire for achievement, power, or superiority (Mustafa, 2011). *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, 2015) is a tragedy of ambition in pursuit of power that is unchecked by morality. It is important to note that the plot of *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, 2015) would have never advanced if the prophecy given by the witches did not make Macbeth eager to take power away from Duncan and become king himself (Sorge, 2017). Nevertheless, Macbeth's vaulting thirst for personal achievement is evident as he lusts after the position of king of Scotland even though he is not affiliated with the lineage of King Duncan. Whilst Macbeth is the cousin of king Duncan, Malcolm and Donalbain are the sons of Duncan and are more immediate ascendants to the throne. This calls to question the power associated with being king of Scotland as it is the highest title that one could be bestowed with, elevating one above other people, and positioning the country's resources at one's grasp. Mohammed et al. (2020) note that ambitionis a human urge in the quest for power and Macbeth falls for the temptation of pursuing the ultimate power of being king, opposing his morality in the process.

In the first half of the play, Macbeth is shown as a brave and noble Scottish general, one of the generals of King Duncan's army. Thus, the power of ambition, when used to achieve peacewithin society and the country, can reveal heroic qualities within individuals. After the battle between Norway and Scotland, Macbeth is characterised as "valiant" and "noble" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.4.24-67) for his efforts in the war. King Duncan praises him for fighting for Scotland, demonstrating patriotic and moral qualities. This initial virtue of patriotism for Scotland paints Macbeth as a hero in his realm, thus suggesting that the power of ambition to serve as an agent of patriotism, when used for good, can imbue qualities of morality and benevolence upon the characters. In the same way, Macduff uses his virtue of patriotism to save Scotland and override the evil that Macbeth has created.

Macbeth is given recognition for his valiant and brave demonstration on the battlefield in which he defeated the traitor, the old Thane of Cawdor, Macdonald. King Duncan awards Macbeth with the title Thane of Cawdor. Could this be a pivotal point in the play that ignites the notion that one can achieve power through murder? For Macbeth, it does seem this way as he contemplates the obstacles in his path to becoming king, [*Aside*] "The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step / On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap / For in my way it lies"

(Shakespeare, 2015, 1.5.48-50). We can see that Macbeth becomes consumed with the idea of morality-free ambition for power. Macbeth's acts of murder can be distinguished between morality-free ambition when he murders for the attainment of kingship and the maintenance of his power as king, and morality-laden ambition in the battlefields defending the throne as acts of patriotism.

It is clear by now that Macbeth has the desire for the attainment of power. The motivation and determination to strive for its accomplishment even in the face of adversity and doubt are bolstered by his wife, Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth is also intensely as ambitious as her husband after reading a letter from him talking about the witches' prophecy that Macbethis foretold to be a king later on. According to Langis (2012), it is the words of her husband which made Lady Macbeth ambitious. She becomes more frantically ambitious than her husband. She loses the balance of her mind. This is pointed out by her words in Act 1, Scene 5:

> Hie thee hither, / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear; / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round, / Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem / To have thee crown'd withal." (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.5.24-29).

Lady Macbeth's response upon learning of king Duncan's intended visit to her castle and his stay as her guest resonates with a profound sense of malevolent ambition. Her daring plan to influence Macbeth to murder Duncan, underscores the influence ofthis ambition, enslaved to evil. This malevolence extends to Macbeth, and the consequences may manifest as the erosion of moral integrity, resulting in disorder and the contamination of the mind.

Macbeth, through his "vaulting ambition" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.7.27) and his wife's evil agency, rapidly turns into the casualty of an unstoppable thirst for power which appears to have no boundaries. Macbeth's fanatical thirst for power is responsible for his actions as it hinders his sense of judgment. This wild thirst for power is outlined in the scenes of the murders.

The symbolism of 'The golden round' as Lady Macbeth phrased to Macbeth when she chides him pursue his ambition is the source of power that had the character altering implication on them both.

5.2.2 Power in gender identity: be "bloody", "brave" and "bold"

Gender features strongly in most societies and is a significant aspect of self-definition for most people. Furthermore, gender identity is viewed as part of a person's broader concept of his or her personal identity (Bussey, 2011). At the time of which the play *Macbeth* (2015) was written, gender was a very rigid and strict construction. Women were expected to be loyal andrespectful daughters, wives, and mothers, whereas men were encouraged to be aggressive (Nabhan, 2020). However, there were still expectations of how men should act. They were the breadwinners and needed to be financially independent. Being a warrior was viewed as being one of the most honourable things a man could be, and dying in battle was the idealised way to die, especially in the period in which the play was set (Nabhan, 2020).

The above gender roles are evident in the play, as Macbeth is first introduced to us by the captain who reports on the war against Norway. The captain provides a vivid account of Macbeth's brutality on the battlefield by stating that Macbeth "like Valour's minion carv'd out his passage" and "he unseam'd him from the nave to th' chaps" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.2.19-23). Through this, Shakespeare deploys a masculine authority of Macbeth that is associated with violence. Macbeth's manliness is glorified by his extreme capacity for brutality.

At this juncture in the play, Lady Macbeth is portrayed in a contrasting setting — domesticated in her castle. In Act 1, Scene 5, readers are introduced to her as she reads a letter from Macbeth, outlining the prophecies of the witches regarding her husband. The letter also informs her of Duncan's impending visit to their castle. It is at this point that she indicates her desire to lose her feminine qualities and gain a masculine identity. She cries,

> Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here / And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull / Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood, / Stop up th' access and passage to remorse / That no compunctions visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between / Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts / And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers… (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.5.39-47).

In this psychological moment, gender roles are upended as Lady Macbeth defies traditional expectations. Stripping herself of femininity, she invokes the spirit of hell, desiring to be unsexed and filled with cruelty. This transformation is driven by her intent to commit the heinous act of murdering King Duncan, who is to be her guest. Lady Macbeth believes that summoning these evil forces is the only way to distance herself from guilt. According to Karuniawan (2021), this scene implies that women are incapable of evil and reinforces the stereotype that masculinity is associated with violence. However, this is wrong because Lady Macbeth's patriarchal consciousness enables her to propel Macbeth into committing treason, something he was not willing to do. This is evident whenshe asks Macbeth, "Are you a man?" (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.5.58), as he displays a lack of emotional control while hallucinating the ghost of Banquo. Macbeth, in response, reveals his adherence to societal notions of manliness by stating, "I am a man again…" (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.4.109) when the ghost vanishes, and he is in control of his emotions.

Macbeth is at the mercy of his wife's control. Lady Macbeth's power lies in Shakespeare's depiction of her as being a female temptress and the conflict of her identity by self-masculinisation contradicts her nature as a traditional woman in a patriarchal society (Ferdous, 2017). The irony of her attempt to impose male characteristics on herself is proved by the fact that she is trying to be agood and dutiful wife who elevates the status of her husband while, at the same time, dominating him. In a male world, such as the one represented in the play, Lady Macbeth reinforces the traditional ideals of masculinity upon her husband to commit murder, and become king, and in so doing, she will become the queen. By prescribing to the status quo of the patriarchal society in the play, Lady Macbeth does not have the authority to act on her intentions, therefore, Macbeth is prompted to act. This can be seen when she uses Macbeth's masculinity to manipulate him when he expresses doubts about murdering Duncan: "When you durst do it then you were a man … you would be so much more the man" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.7.49-51).

Macbeth succumbs to the desires of his wife as he feels compelled to validate his masculine virtue. Moreover, Lady Macbeth serves as inspiration for Macbeth's murderous actions, drawing parallels to the biblical narrative of Adam being persuaded by Eve in Genesis to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Kharbe, 2016). This unnatural and manipulative power dynamic propels them toward a destructive path, ultimately leading to their demise (Kharbe, 2016).

Fearing the prophecy of the witches that Banquo's heirs will seize the throne, Macbeth

hires murderers to kill Banquo and his son. At this point, he has associated his masculinity with cruelty and violence to such an extent that he thinks nothing of ordering the murder of his best friend and his son. Ironically, he convinces the murderers to commit the deed by asking if they are manly enough to take revenge upon his name: "Now, if you have a station in the file, / Not i'th' worst rank of manhood, say't ..." (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.1.104-105).

The conspicuous similarity in the way he manipulates these men and the way he was manipulated by his wife earlier, emphasises his acceptance of a cruel view of what it is to be a man. As Macbeth's world falls apart around him after the murder of Banquo, he resorts more to his convoluted view of masculinity and what action it takes to be a man. Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff's family which signalled his spiral out of control.

Another male character, Macduff, whilst portrayed as a loyal and clever man, also shared Macbeth's cruel and violent views of masculinity. When news of his family's murder reaches him whilst in the company of Malcolm, he is urged to "dispute it like a man" (Shakespeare, 2015, IV, I, 221). Macduff reacts immediately by turning to violence to remedy the situation and associates the kind of solution with being a man. This is seen when he states, "I shall do so" (Shakespeare, 5.1.223). These various acts of violence demonstrates the danger of prescribing to the status quo of men being associate with physical force in disputes.

5.2.3 Corruption of power: "I am in blood stepp'd in so far"

Corruption of power is something brought upon by greed to obtain what one desires. The problem of corruption has been seen either as a structural problem of politics or economics or as a cultural and individual moral problem (Kesur, 2014). Drawing on Kesur (2014, p. 5560) the definition of corruption consequently ranges from the broad terms of "misuse of public power" and "moral decay". A more precise definition, linked to the play, is offered by Khan (1996), who stated that corruption is,

> Behaviour that deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of private-regarding motives such as wealth, power, or status (p. 12).

Corrupted individuals are compelled to pursue or accumulate more; nothing else holds significance except their quest for gain (Gillies, 2019). Thus, corruption typically emerges from a yearning, pursuit, or possession of power (Gillies, 2019). Furthermore, corruption brings

about distinct alterations in the behaviour of the corrupted individual (Hayat et al., 2021). He/She can be discovered behaving abnormally, driven by the overriding motive of attaining power, wealth, or authority, and the corrupted person will display evident changes in the behaviour (Hayat et al., 2021). According to Kesur (2014), in the play *Macbeth* (2011), this represents an element of man versus nature, as Macbeth goes against the natural order of things, ultimately leading to his self-destruction because he proves unfit to govern the nation of Scotland.

When Macbeth became Thane of Cawdor, his wife, Lady Macbeth, was delighted to hear such news. Upon hearing that Duncan, the king, would be coming to dinner at their castle, she entertains the morally corrupt idea of murdering him, aiming for Macbeth to usurp the throne. This serves as an example of corruption in the play. As soon as she became more powerful, she was lusting for more. This is seen when she states, “Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be / What thou art promis’d…” (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.5.14-15).

Soon after meeting the witches, Macbeth engages in self-contemplation, wrestling with the situation and stating, “First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed…” (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.7.13-14). In this moment, Macbeth recognises the course of action required, which is to pursue kingship, as the witches' prophecies start unfolding, but he hesitates until Lady Macbethintervenes and manipulates him. The witches plant the seed of ambition and power in his mind,creating a conflict within his conscience. Ultimately, he succumbs to the temptation of power.Before the witch’s prophecy, Macbeth was a noble and loyal warrior to Scotland, however, his mind became corrupted by the idea of power.

Power serves as a corrupting force in human behaviour. Macbeth's relentless pursuit of power drives him to corruption, compelling him to destroy anyone who opposes his ascent. The relationship between Banquo and Macbeth undergoes a profound transformation as a result of the corrupting influence of power. At the beginning of the play, their friendship is strong but as soon as the three witches tell them prophecies, power enters their relationship and destroys it (Choksi, 2016). At this point, Macbeth commits evil deeds without the manipulation of his wife. He encourages Lady Macbeth to “be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, / Till thou applaud the deed” (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.3.45-46). This signals the corruption of Macbeth’s mind.

However, Macbeth transforms into a “hell-hound” (Shakespeare, 2015, 5.7.3), embarking on a ruthless killing spree to secure and maintain power. His chilling realisation is expressed when he declares, “I am in blood stepp’d in so far that should I wade no more.

Returning were as tedious as go o'er" (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.4.136-138). In essence, Macbeth acknowledges that he is so deeply immersed in bloodshed that it would be more challenging to cease his murderous acts and revert to his former self than to continue down the path of brutality. His relentless pursuit of power drives him to further atrocities, including the massacre of Macduff's family.

The play represents the idea that when people come into positions of power where the definition of control becomes a new definition according to their point of view, they unleash a feeling in their minds that whatever decision they make directly conflicts with the lives of other people, and they do not feel responsible. That is when power corrupts the minds of people. People in power feel that they can do anything when they are in power for a long period. *Macbeth* is a classic tale of greed and the corrupting influence of power.

5.2.4 Power leading to guilt: "out damned spot"

What is guilt? Freud (as cited in Tenkit, 2015) defines guilt as shame turned inwards. Similarly, Gray (2018) notes that it is self-punishment for misguided activity. Concerning the play, *Macbeth* (2011), the feeling of guilt consumes Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as their activities in pursuit of power lead to their demise. The guilt caused by the murders, leaves a metaphorical mark of blood on Lady Macbeth's hands which she tries to wash out, but fails because it is a stain on her conscious. This emphasises the severity of her guilt which led to her demise.

In Act 1, Scene 7, Macbeth hesitates about whether he should murder king Duncan, as he says, "We will proceed no further in this business. / He hath honoured me…" (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.7.31-32). Only a person who knows good from bad will feel guilt for doing something wrong. Here, Macbeth is portrayed as a good man, who recognises the immorality of his actions. But his awakened conscience is suppressed under the provocations made by Lady Macbeth. This is where Shakespeare shows that the character is going to feel guilty.

Macbeth, who is portrayed as a formidable warrior on the battlefield at the beginning of the play, leads himself to a battle of a different nature. His ambition to become king leads to a battle with his conscience over what he must do to achieve his aspiration. When Macbethis outside Duncan's chamber, soon before murdering him, he sees a vision of a bloody daggerand asks himself, "…art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?" (Shakespeare, 2015, 2.1.37-39). The bloodied dagger can be seen as a symbol of Macbeth's deteriorating conscience. Despite his prowess on the battlefield and capacity for brutality against Scotland's enemies, the guilt associated with murder begins to

weigh heavily on him. Macbeth's internal conflict arises from the realisation that his power, once employed for the greater good of Scotland, has now been twisted to serve his selfish ambition and the act of regicide. This moral descent contributes to the erosion of his mental and emotional well-being.

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth appears to be in an extremely anxious state. He admits that the act of murdering King Duncan also murdered his peace. This can be seen when he says, “Sleep no more, Macbeth does murder sleep…” (Shakespeare, 2015, 2.2.38-39). The weight of his actions has caused an irreparable internal struggle. Macbeth sets himself on a downward spiral into immense guilt.

The guilt associated with Macbeth’s murderous impulses in his effort to maintain power is also shown in the banquet scene. Shakespeare demonstrates the devastating effect of guilt in the psychological domain of Macbeth as he hallucinates Banquo’s ghost at his coronation dinner as king. Macbeth speaks to his hallucination of Banquo’s ghost by saying, “If I stand here, I saw him.” (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.4.75). Macbeth’s conscience is overwhelmed by guilt. His sense of guilt is so powerful that he loses his sense of reality. The torment of a conscience plagued by murder has led to him losing his grip on sanity.

By the end of the play, Macbeth is deeply impacted psychologically, and his melancholic view of life is demonstrated through his soliloquy,

> Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time, and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing (Shakespeare, 2015, 5.5.19-27).

Shakespeare portrays Macbeth's life as a journey filled with passion, suffering, and pride. However, in the end, Macbeth realises that the pursuit of power, justified through various means, has left his life ultimately meaningless. The weight of guilt intensifies as the ghosts of his victims haunt him, his wife takes her own life, and enemies close in. Despite being the king of Scotland, Macbeth experiences a profound emptiness in life. He perceives life as a mere shadow, lacking substance and authenticity—a pale imitation of true existence.

Plagued by intense guilt, Lady Macbeth’s demise portrays the idea of guilt coming to full circle. Unlike Macbeth, she had not committed murder, but she was instrumental in manipulating him to do her bidding in pursuit of power.

At the beginning of the play, Lady Macbeth is portrayed as ruthless and ambitious. However, the malevolent deeds she orchestrated begin to take a toll on her well-being after she ascends to the throne as queen. She becomes increasingly aware that despite her elevated status, true happiness eludes her. Lady Macbeth questions her happiness and questions whether her sins are worth the crown, “Naught's had, all's spent, / Where our desire is got without content. / Tis safer to be that which we destroy / Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy" (Shakespeare, 2015, 3.2.4-7).

Lady Macbeth's assertion that it is preferable to be the victim than the perpetrator, burdened by guilt, marks a pivotal moment. This contemplation leads her to entertain thoughts of suicide. As the weight of guilt intensifies, she becomes incapacitated, immersed in profound guilt for her sins, haunted by the lingering spectre of bloodshed that stains her conscience.This can be seen when she sleepwalks and says, “The thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? / What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o' / that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all /with /this starting” (Shakespeare, 2015, 5.1.38-40). She can no longer conceal her guiltby summoning all the evil spirits to fill her as she so hoped for earlier in the play.

5.2.5 Positive power: “our power is ready”

The impact of power on an individual is indeed shaped by how they wield and manage it. Responsible and ethical use of power can lead to positive outcomes, aligning with the common good and moral principles. Conversely, the misuse of power for nefarious purposes can result in negative consequences, potentially causing harm and moral deterioration. It underscores the crucial role of ethics and responsibility in the exercise of power.

Macbeth’s ambition to be king poisons his outlook on life. His attributes at the beginning of the play, particularly on the battlefield are admirable. He is seen as brave, courageous, and patriotic. However, once poisoned by the witches’ prophecy that he will be king, those attributes turn evil. His bravery is enacted in the murder of Duncan, however, his refusal to listen to the voices of caution from the witches’ second prophecy and brutality demonstrated through the longevity of his tyrannical reign as king showcased how his patriotism turned to selfishness.

Duncan is the model of a good, virtuous king who puts the welfare of the country above his own and seeks, like a gardener, to nurture and grow the kingdom which is his responsibility. Duncan is the living embodiment of the political and social order that Macbeth destroys.

According to Bloom (2010), Duncan's emotional and compassionate speaking style contrasts with Lady Macbeth's idea of masculinity. This positive power can be seen when Duncan says to Macbeth, "Welcome hither, / I have begun to plant thee and will labour / To make thee full of growing (Shakespeare, 2015, 1.4.28-30).

Malcolm is Duncan's oldest son and the heir to the throne of Scotland. Malcolm is a character that experiences significant growth throughout the play. In the wake of his father's death, Malcolm is shown to be a coward, "…it is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse, / And let us not be dainty of leave-taking, / But shift away" (Shakespeare, 2015, 2.3.139-141). Instead of asserting himself as the rightful heir to the throne and investigating his father's death, he flees the country. In England, however, Malcolm grows into the man he needs to be to become king. He grows as a leader, recruiting an army to his cause. He also displays a level of cunning previously unseen when he tests Macduff's loyalty to him by pretending to be a worse human being than Macbeth himself. After Macduff passes Malcolm's tests, the two join forces. Malcolm ultimately proves to have grown from the person who fledthe country initially, showing courage and strength by invading Scotland and seizing his father's crown from Macbeth, "Come, we go to the king; our power is ready; / Our lacking is nothing but our leave." (Shakespeare, 2015, 4.3.239-240). Malcolm demonstrates that his agency is a counter-tyrannical power that will eliminate Macbeth.

This insurrection of power against tyrannical Macbeth is a demonstration of positive power because Malcolm recognised that Scotland is ruled by evil, and he stands for power with a moral force. When Macbeth is finally slain by Macduff, the order is restored. Power is shown to have returned to a man of regal ethics, the true heir according to the wishes of the late King Duncan.

Thus, by learners engaging with issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, the fostering role that literature could have to detect power structures in society could be recognised and addressed (Killgren de Klonia, 2017). Giroux and McLaren (1986) also add that empowering learners to become critical, active citizens is an aim of an education that is transformative.

5.3 Conclusion

This literary analysis focused on the phenomenon of power in the play *Macbeth*. Power is a fundamental feature in human social relationships and can be a negative phenomenon if left unchecked by morality and nobility, as seen in the play. Characters such as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were fuelled by an evil ambition to rule with tyranny upon those who opposed their

power. At the helm, guided by seemingly evil women and his own innate wickedness, Macbeth ruled with brutality, but his power was not absolute. The organised insurrection by Malcolm and Macduff as agents of morality and the common good brings the tyranny of Macbeth to an end. Therefore, the portrayal of power through events and characters in the play holds significant influence on our comprehension of power in the real world.

The focus now shifts to the next chapter, where the study's findings will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 6

DATA PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided a literary analysis concentrating on the phenomenon of power in the play *Macbeth.* In the next two chapters, I discuss the findings from the generated data that explores learners' engagements with issues of power in the play (*Macbeth*) as a catalyst to critically engage with issues of power in their lives. In this chapter, I present the thematically analysed data, revealing key findings related to Research Questions 1 and 2 of the study across various sub-themes. The data were obtained through an open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and a visual task.

Table 1 below summarises Themes 1 and 2 and the sub-themes that emerged in the study:

Table 1: Themes 1 and 2 and their related sub-themes

Theme	**Sub-themes**
Theme 1: Learners' Recognitions and Understandings of Issues of Power in the Play, *Macbeth*	Sub-theme 1.1: Learners' recognition of issues of power in the play, Macbeth
	Sub-theme 1.2: Learners' engagement with issues of power through Macbeth and Lady Macbeth
	Sub-theme 1.3: Learners' perspectives on the power to rule through Duncan and Macbeth
	Sub-theme 1.4: Learners' engagement with qualities of leadership in the play, Macbeth
Theme 2: Learners' Engagement with Issues of Power in Their Everyday	

Lives in Relation to the Play, *Macbeth*	
	Sub-theme 2.1: Learners' exploring power in political and social settings: Government and school
	Sub-theme 2.2: Learners' encounters and awareness of power in the dynamics of social relations
	Sub-theme 2.3: Learners' exploring power in the psychological domain: The power of the self

6.2 Theme 1: Learners' Recognitions and Understandings of Issues of Power in the Play, *Macbeth*

The data generation method addressed the following:

Table 2: Recap of RQ 1 and Objective 1

Research Question 1	Objective 1
How do learners in two Grade 11 classes recognise and understand issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*?	To explore how learners in two Grade 11 classes recognise and understand issues of power in the play, Macbeth.

The findings derived from this theme will be discussed within the following sub-themes:

6.2.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Learners' recognition of issues of power in the play, Macbeth

Engaging with a sample group of 55 learners, the initial approach involved framing the play (*Macbeth*) as a catalyst to enhance the participants' interactions with the concept of power and, consequently, explore related issues. In the open-ended questionnaire, learners were initially asked to identify four issues of power from the play without being directed to any specific references to the text that would pre-empt their responses. It is important to note that all 55 learners were unable to identify four different issues of power and their responses largely overlapped thematically. It was found that all 55 learners' recognitions of issues of power in the play were between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

Analysing the data gathered from the open-ended questionnaire, it was discovered that Lady Macbeth's characterisation served as the primary point of reference for learners in identifying a character grappling with power dynamics. Out of 55 participants, 47 critiqued her portrayal. Pseudonyms were used to safeguard learners' identities.

Chris pointed out that, "*Lady Macbeth had power over Macbeth thus she was able to convince him to kill Duncan*". Her words "*had power over*" signify that the phenomenon of power is the ability to exercise control over others. The characteristic of the issue of power identified by Chris in the play could be an indication of her understanding of human social relations as powerholders coerce the powerless into doing things they otherwise would not do. Employing the word "*convince*", Chris suggests that Macbeth needed to be persuaded to believe that killing Duncan was necessary. Importantly, Macbeth was reluctant to commit murder, diminishing his agency to carry out the decision.

Thando also recognised an issue of power in the character of Lady Macbeth by stating that "*Lady Macbeth had the power to manipulate Macbeth to kill Duncan*". Unlike Chris, Thando used the word "*manipulate*" to describe a recognised issue of power in the portrayal of Lady Macbeth. Thando's remark could suggest that Lady Macbeth's power lay in the controlshe desired to exert over Macbeth. Hateley (2004) argued that Lady Macbeth's power to manipulate was a dangerous trait as it resulted in the failed autonomy of Macbeth in the face of difficult circumstances and decisions. The recognition of control is extended by Amahle asshe stated that "*Lady Macbeth influenced her husband to fight and kill for kingship*". Amahle's identification offers a new dynamic to the power issue by exposing Lady Macbeth's attempt to advance her husband so that she might gain power for him and through him.

It is evident from the responses above that the learners believe that Lady Macbeth led Macbeth to murder Duncan. The three learners used different words, "*convince*","*manipulate*", and "*influence*", which have different meanings about how learners think of leadership. The word "*convince",* as employed by Chris, suggests that leadership entails persuading others to believe that a decision or action is justified and truthful to the extent thatthe convinced perceives no alternatives to their reality. This parallels Macbeth's situation, where he was led to believe (and perhaps believed himself) that the only path to kingship wasthrough the murder of King Duncan. Thando, using the word "*manipulate*", implies that leadership involves an intrusion into others' mental and emotional sides to achieve what the leader wants. Amahle used the word "*influence*", indicating that leadership is the capacity to

alter the natural development of others. It is possible that learners may perceive leadership in different ways but maintain the idea of control over others.

According to Mohammed (2019), women played crucial roles in shaping men's actions during Shakespeare's era. Women, in this patriarchal society, could attain elevated social status solely through the societal progression of their husbands. Lady Macbeth, driven by ambition, preyed on Macbeth's wavering ambition to commit regicide. This manipulation underscores how Lady Macbeth compelled Macbeth to conform to the patriarchal system to become violent in the pursuit of ambition. In this context, patriarchy not only constrains women's autonomy and decision-making but also significantly restricts men and their life choices. Mohammed's (2019) claim does align with the recognitionof Lady Macbeth's pursuit of power through Macbeth which was understood by Alisha as shebelieved that "*Lady Macbeth influenced Macbeth to take over Scotland, thus, promoting her status to Queen of Scotland*". While the learners did not furnish explicit details regarding LadyMacbeth's manipulation of Macbeth, they imply that her central goal was to instigate corruptionthrough murder. Unable to carry out the act herself, Lady Macbeth resorted to enabling Macbeth to commit the murder of King Duncan.

Likewise, insights from the interviews reveal that four out of the 10 interviewed learners acknowledged Lady Macbeth's manipulation of Macbeth when prompted to identify power dynamics in the play. Although it is apparent that fewer learners in the interviews madesuch recognitions compared to the open-ended questionnaire, those who responded in the interviews offered more profound insights into the power dynamics embodied by LadyMacbeth in the play. Jenna, for instance, highlighted manipulation and control from a genderedperspective, stating that,

> *Lady Macbeth manipulates Macbeth and tells him that if he does not murder then he is weak and he is not a man. That shows us that some women have a sort of power over men.*

It is evident that through Jenna's recognition of the conflict of gender in the play between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, she understands that gender is represented out of its usual traditional order. Jenna recognises the dominance that Lady Macbeth demonstrates over her husband by manipulating him to prescribe to patriarchal values. The data aligns with the views of ALRaznah (2020) who claimed that Lady Macbeth is one of the most overpowering female

figures on the Shakespearean stage, yet she cannot exceed male authority and power in a patriarchal society, so she uses it to her advantage to attain social mobility for herself.

Similarly, in an interview with Alisha, she was able to draw on Lady Macbeth's deliberate and strategic demasculinisation of Macbeth and the removal of his masculine character or qualities, by stating that, "*I think she knew what she was doing to him*". Alisha's response offers a glimpse into her comprehension that Lady Macbeth's quest for power was cunning and deceptive, relying on exploiting a patriarchal system designed to oppress her in order to advance her own agenda.

In the interview with Nicole, there is a clear sense of resentment towards Lady Macbeth's character. Nicole's identification of a power issue in the play centres on the motive she believes is behind the manipulation of Macbeth. She expressed that,

> *Lady Macbeth manipulated Macbeth to get what she wanted. So she didn't value anything of what he wanted. She just wanted to be on top and she used the person that she loved to get there.*

Whilst Jenna and Alisha engage with the issue of power in respect of gender between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, it is evident that Nicole also engages with the issue of ambition for power that is morally unchecked. The contrast in Nicole's responses is that she makes it clear that manipulation is only the mechanism used to achieve power. Nicole knows that Lady Macbeth's ambition is to attain the highest power in Scotland through Macbeth, but since she is limited as a female, she must manipulate Macbeth to do her bidding. Similarly, Mustafa (2011) claimed that ambitious persons seek to be the best at what they choose to do for attainment, power, or superiority. In support, Ferdous (2017) claimed that Lady Macbeth saw herself as the only catalyst for social and political change and since her husband apparently lacked masculine values, she had to compel him to authenticate himself, thus, enabling her to become the wife of the King of Scotland.

In another interview, Charles's recognitions extend the idea of control and manipulation as issues of power by stating that,

> *Lady Macbeth weakens his manhood in order for him to fulfil her desires because he was too full of the milk of human kindness and he had too many morals, so he*

didn't kill the king, but his wife triggered something in him to fulfil what she wanted for both of them.

Like Jenna, Alisha and Nicole, Charles also recognises the disruption of the traditional order of gender roles in a patriarchal culture. Charles provides a holistic response by drawing on the nature of Macbeth's character which is exploited by Lady Macbeth for her desire to achieve power. Charles began by stating that "*Lady Macbeth weakens his manhood*", which suggests that he is aware of the play's contextual expectations of a man in a patriarchal society and the potential damage in ridiculing the patriarchal status of a man as a mode of power. In the context of the play, Nabhan (2020) claims that women were expected to be loyal and respectful daughters, wives, and mothers, whereas men were encouraged to be aggressive. The word "*triggered*", as employed by Charles, conveys his understanding of the issue of manipulation as character-altering, as it made Macbeth turn from his apparently kind nature to murder King Duncan. This aligns with the assertions made by Hayat et al. (2021) and Mohammed (2019), who contend that the pursuit of power conflicted with Macbeth's morality. Driven by the overriding motive of acquiring power, wealth, and authority, Macbeth underwent a behavioural change.

Another prominent example of issues of power recognised from the play by learners that were generated in their responses to the open-ended questionnaire lies with the character, Macbeth. It was found that 47 out of 55 learners also remarked that Macbeth's brutality and murderous impulses to maintain control was an issue of power in the play. The data shows that learners understood that Macbeth's tyranny over Scotland was caused by his incessant need to maintain power and was an issue that took the form of numerous murders.

In the open-ended questionnaire, Tom highlighted Macbeth's attempted murder of his former friend, Banquo, stating, "*Macbeth orders hitmen to kill Banquo*". However, since the question aimed at eliciting learners' recognition of issues of power in the play, Tom's comment does not provide significant insight into his understanding of why this act could be an issue or his feelings about this particular example. Unlike Tom, Nomfundo provides greater insight into the issue of power that Macbeth portrays, noting that "*Macbeth becomes power hungry and changed him into a demanding dictator*". Mark's understanding of Macbeth's issue of power also draws on tyranny, stating that "*Macbeth stopping at nothing to achieve becoming the king*". Taylor expands on the issue of tyrannical power by making the recognition of "*Macbeth's killing and ruling because of selfish ambition*". The responses by Nomfundo,

Mark, and Taylor share a commonality, which suggests that Macbeth served his own interests to stay in power as King of Scotland. Moreover, the learners understood that Macbeth did not need Lady Macbeth to manipulate him once he became king. Kesur (2014) highlights the point that knowing about such issues of power deepens one's understanding of mankind's capacity for evil and the pursuit of power.

The responses in the interviews seem to provide more insight into similar recognitions as the open-ended questionnaire. Six out of the 10 interviewed learners identified Macbeth's character to be representative of different issues of power. Max grappled with the notion that power could be forcibly taken away and was not absolute. He expressed this by stating, "*I think it's when Macbeth killed Duncan because Duncan was supposed to have all the power because he was King. But Macbeth killed him, taking power forcefully*". The learners, including Max, prominently acknowledged murder as a means to seize power from a seemingly all-powerful ruler, such as King Duncan.

Other learners, such as Lungelo, underscored their comprehension of murder in the pursuit of power. He remarked, "*Macbeth had the full ability to go and execute Macduff's family. He didn't have any challenges in doing that*". Ayanda also stated that "*he kills without any question in his mind, he just did it*". Lungelo and Ayanda suggest that Macbeth's maintenance of power as the King of Scotland involves a lack of morality and conscience, leading to a literal demoralisation. This aligns with Ferdous's perspective (2017), who also believed that Lady Macbeth and Macbeth were aware that killing was wrong but endeavoured to be corrupt nonetheless. Zaaiman (2020) pointed out that power is associated with an agent's ability and capacity to get others to do something they would otherwise not do. Thus, the contradiction of power relations is evident as Freire (1970) posited that dehumanisation is not only marked by those whose humanity has been stolen but also by those who have stolen it, which distorts the ideal of a just and equal society.

In responding to the open-ended questionnaire, five learners demonstrated the ability to reference events and examples of power from various parts of the text. Sam, for instance, recognised the power of deception and lies that the witches held over Macbeth, influencing him to believe in their prophecies. She stated that "*the witches had the power to make Macbeth believe in lies through their prophecies*". Sam's statement "*the witches had the power … through their prophecies*" suggests that the witches are highly manipulative beings as they gave Macbeth a taste of power which he believed was within his control to pursue. Shakespeare presented the witches as powerful beings in the natural world (Sorge, 2017). As such, Macbeth

was manipulated by the lies that they presented as truths. Sorge (2017) suggests that Macbeth would never have advanced if the prophecy given by the witches had not made him eager to take power.

Interestingly, Tom recognised that Duncan's issue of power was that he had no power over his followers, thus, he was betrayed on more than one occasion. Tom stated that "*Duncan did not have power over everyone he ruled. Macbeth and the traitor betrayed him*". Tom's remark is a contrast to other responses made about Macbeth's brutal efforts to maintain power. Tom's statement reflects his understanding of power in the play as a phenomenon associated with control and obedience. These were problematic aspects for Duncan since "*Macbeth and the traitor betrayed him*". The traitor that Tom is referring to is the first Thane of Cawdor. He draws on the contrasting nature of Duncan and Macbeth's maintenance of power and leadership as Duncan tried to maintain power through his subordinates whereas Macbeth sought to maintain absolute power through murder.

Lastly, Ron decided not to explain his thoughts in full sentences, but rather opted to encapsulate his response to issues of power in the play thematically as "*gender, status, patriarchy,* and *dictatorship*". By *gender,* it is conceivable that Ron identified issues of power in Shakespeare's depiction of gender roles prescribed to men and women. Ron noted the potential ambiguity, particularly in the representations of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. He honed in on the concept of *patriarchy,* which was evident in other learners' responses that were closely linked to dominant narratives of gender evident in the context of the play's patriarchal set-up.

The themes of "gender" and "patriarchy" speak to each other as the play represents how dominant gender narratives in a patriarchal system are reinforced. Ron's use of the word "*status*" suggests that he may believe power is associated with one's social standing. In the context of the play, where kingship is a position linked to high status, Ron implies that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were extraordinarily driven to attain this coveted status.

Ron also identified "*dictatorship*" as a theme in the play, highlighting it as an issue of power. He might have understood Macbeth's grim and unyielding way to maintain his position as King of Scotland as an act of social injustice. The significance of recognising the ideas of *gender, patriarchy, status,* and *dictatorship* in the play could mean that Ron was conscious of social injustices and dominant gender narratives in the play.

Thus, the diagram below represents the learners' recognition of issues of power in the play, *Macbeth.*

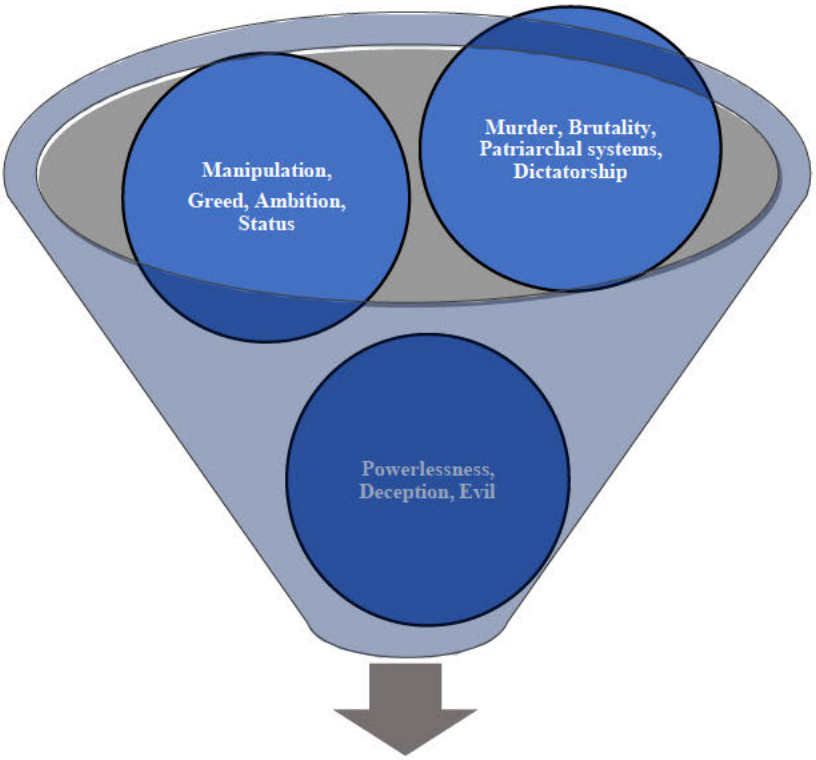


Figure 8: Learners' recognition of issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*

6.2.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Learners' engagement with issues of power through Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

In the preceding sub-section, it was established that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth served as crucial starting points for exploring issues of power in the play. Although the learners provided examples of power dynamics, the data did not indicate their sentiments or feelings about the representation of power through the characters of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. In so doing, Borsheim-Black et al. (2014) believe that learners read *with* and *against* the text's context, revealing and disrupting dominant cultures and literary elements by questioning who they perceive as more powerful. This approach empowers learners to become contributors of knowledge, aligning with Freire's (1970) problem-posing principle of critical pedagogy. Learners were able to draw on events to justify their responses and challenge dominant interpretations that may have been taught. In this sub-section, a deeper exploration of the learners' recognitions and understandings was conducted through their responses to a question

in the open-ended questionnaire. The question specifically inquired about their perspectives on the more powerful character between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.

The bar graph below indicates the number of learners who chose Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, respectively, as the more powerful character, as found in the open-ended questionnaires:

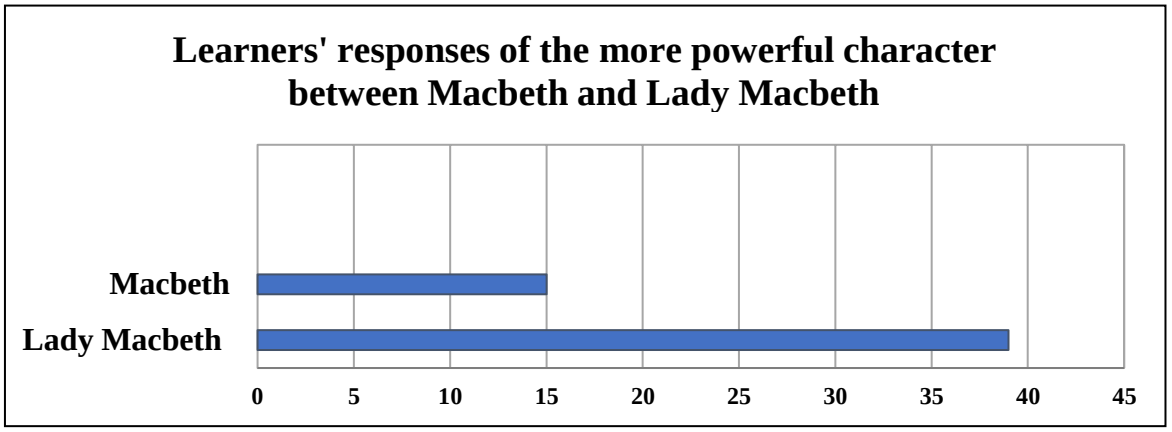


Figure 9: Learners' responses to the more powerful character between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

The bar graph above illustrates that of the total sample of 55 learners, 39 learners recognised Lady Macbeth to be more powerful than Macbeth, whereas only 13 learners recognised Macbeth to be more powerful than Lady Macbeth. The significant number of learners who perceived Lady Macbeth as more powerful is notable, suggesting that they may have considered her traits as crucial to the dynamics of the relationship, and perhaps, feared. Chris pointed out that,

> *Lady Macbeth is more powerful because when we first saw her in the play, she was already planning Duncan's murder showing how merciless, more ruthless and more ambitious she was than her husband. He would not have gone through with the murder if it was not for her influence.*

According to Chris, power in the domain of interpersonal relations was understood in the play as individuals' characteristics that are at battle. In other words, the dominant characteristics of an individual such as Lady Macbeth enabled her to enact her ambition through Macbeth. Chris believed that Lady Macbeth's characteristics of *mercilessness*,

ruthlessness, and ambition afforded her power that superseded Macbeth's. Chris also explored Macbeth's inability to go through with the murder without her influence. Chris's observations suggest that Lady Macbeth's dominance over Macbeth rendered her more powerful, shaping the trajectory of the plot. The qualities attributed to Lady Macbeth positioned her actions against Macbeth's nature, playing a significant role in determining the plot. Chris implies that if Macbeth had not followed through with Lady Macbeth's plan to murder King Duncan, he would not have seized kingship. Moreover, Lady Macbeth would not have attained the power she desired. It is evident that Chris recognised and understood Lady Macbeth's disruption of gender roles and influence. While Lady Macbeth never committed murder, she portrayed traditionally understood masculine attributes such as ambition and violent intentions in a patriarchal society. This portrayal signalled Macbeth to execute dominance (Karuniawan, 2021). According to Rivera and Scholar (2020), in the realm of gender-social norms, women often source power from ideas of how men should behave.

Like Chris, Asanda understood Lady Macbeth to be a merciless, relentless, and bloodthirsty woman, who used her husband to gain power. She stated that "*Lady Macbeth is manipulative, she has no mercy towards others, and she would do anything to stay in power. She is also very bloodthirsty*". Similarly, Nomfundo drew on the notion of deceit and power dynamics within the relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth by recognising that,

> *If it was not for the influence and power, she had over her husband, he would not have gone through with the deed. The power that a wife has over her husband is a powerful tool most take for granted.*

Nomfundo drew on her personal understanding and recognised Lady Macbeth's exploitation of Macbeth's manhood within a patriarchal society. This aligns with Bicchieri et al.'s (2021) assertion that the behaviour of men and women in a patriarchal society is contingent on societal norms. Nomfundo understood that Lady Macbeth recognised the need to advance her husband so that she could, in turn, be elevated. It is evident that Nomfundo was enacting what McKenzie and Jarvie (2018, p. 298) described as 'resistant reading'. In doing so, she adopted a critical awareness of embedded notions in the text. She went on to add that from the representation of Lady Macbeth as an "*influential*" and "*powerful*" wife, women, in general, possess the same qualities as their partners, which is not overtly recognised and taken seriously, especially given

the expectation that women are supposed to be submissive and subjugated in a patriarchal society.

Nomfundo's remarks also signify her understanding of intimate relationships between a husband and a wife, as she claimed that "*the power that a wife has over her husband is a powerful tool most take for granted*". Nomfundo may have recognised the idea that in intimate relationships, especially in a patriarchal society, societal norms dictate that men should assume a superior position as decision-makers, thereby positioning women in passive and submissive roles. Nomfundo went on to disrupt such patriarchal notions by stating that "*most take for granted*" the power of the wife, which implies that women do influence their intimate partners. This is seen in the play as Lady Macbeth does not submit to her husband. Instead, she encourages him to realise his patriarchal identity in society through her use of guilt.

Freire (1970) knew that if teachers perceived learners as meek listeners and reproducers of the dominant ideology in texts, society could be the arena in which learners enact such ideology. Through the raised consciousness of issues of power between men and women, Nomfundo might be in a better position to avoid the perils of subscribing to prevalent dominant gender social norms.

Another response that reinforced Nomfundo's claims was from Jordan who used the words "*she hurt his ego*" to justify his response of choosing Lady Macbeth over Macbeth. Jordan's understanding linked to what Lady Macbeth sought to do to propel him to prove his manhood in the play. Jordan recognised what Bates (2020) and Rivera and Scholar (2020) pointed out when they claimed that women in a patriarchal society know how to exploit men in the psychological domain by harnessing masculine stereotypes to damage them.

Thando introduced a new dynamic by suggesting a sense of admiration for Lady Macbeth as a representation of a strong woman by stating that, "*she controlled him, pushed him and encouraged him to kill, she is a strong woman*". Her response contrasts with other learners' recognition of Lady Macbeth's control over Macbeth as an issue of power. Thando believes that Lady Macbeth "*is a strong woman*", indicating that she may perceive Lady Macbeth as defying the dominant gender norms of her society by leading Macbeth toward realising his ambition. The implications of Thando's response suggest that she might aspire to embody the characteristics of Lady Macbeth, aiming to be *a strong woman* herself. This insight is significant in understanding that Thando constructed her belief about a woman's power based on the extent of control and influence she has over men. The data presented a picture of a power

struggle between men and women as the latter appeared to seek to assume the role of the former whose power was traditionally derived from the extent of dominance.

Beyonce concurred with Thando's perspective, expressing admiration for Lady Macbeth's dominance over Macbeth and adding that she believes "*girls are better than boys*". The data suggest a desire for power, as the notion of gender equality is supplanted by a radical view of surpassing men to attain emancipation. This perspective could potentially foster a reversal of dominance. By "*better*", in the context of using Lady Macbeth as a key reference, Beyonce upheld the notion of gender inequality. To break the shackles of patriarchy, both men and women should be freed from the belief that the more powerful gender is the one that exerts greater dominance over the other.

Tate refuted the above claims outrightly by believing that Lady Macbeth showed her weakness through regret and guilt, which led to her demise. Thus, Macbeth was more powerful, according to Tate, as he fought till the end. Tate responded by stating that,

> *Macbeth is the more powerful one. Lady Macbeth showed her weakness by regretting the things she did and also, she ended up committing suicide. Macbeth fought till the end, and he was brave until the last day.*

By stating the "*more powerful one*", Tate appeared to believe that power lay in the maintenance of psychological control as inspired by the character, Macbeth, who demonstrated bravery amidst obstacles and afflictions that were presented to him as he "*fought till the end, and he was brave until the last day*". Tate contrasted Macbeth's resolute approach to maintaining his position as King with Lady Macbeth's weak psychological state even though she was the enabler. It is possible to conclude that whilst Tate neglected to recognise Macbeth's psychological deterioration, he believed that Macbeth's determination was admirable. His response also challenges Thando's earlier response that Lady Macbeth was "*a strong woman*" as Tate believed that Lady Macbeth was not strong since "*she ended up committing suicide*" because she could not cope with the guilt of her wrongdoings. Freud (as cited in Tenkit, 2015) concurs when he mentions that guilt is often the shame of one's actions turned inwards.

Brian identified the conventional expectations of manhood that Lady Macbeth had imposed on Macbeth. According to Brian, Macbeth truly embraced his manhood when he realised that he could carry out additional murders independently, free from the influence of Lady Macbeth. Brian expressed that,

> *At first he wasn't, but as the play carries on, Macbeth becomes more powerful and realises that he is a man and does things on his own without being persuaded by Lady Macbeth.*

Brian's statement suggests that he is reading *with* the text's literary elements (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014) as he drew on the play's plot to recognise that Macbeth independently embodied the idea of masculinity that Lady Macbeth desired of him. Brian's remark could suggest that he believed in the traditional idea of manhood by stating that Macbeth "*realises that he is a man*". According to Nabhan (2020), Shakespeare deploys a masculine authority in Macbeth that is associated with violence. As such, Brian may have believed that the power of a man lay in his extreme capacity for brutality. Importantly, Brian also added that Macbeth "*does things on his own without being persuaded by Lady Macbeth*", which signifies that he believed that Macbeth was a weak man who needed to be persuaded to become a strong man willing to kill. This was further reinforced by a response by Amahle who claimed that "*everyone was afraid of him*". Amahle may have understood power as the ability to induce fear in others which subsequently meant that the greater the fear that people had of Macbeth, the more powerful he became.

Samkelo claimed that "*he was a man, he was king, he killed*". Samkelo's response is noteworthy as he drew on an equation of a powerful man through the representation of Macbeth, characterising him as a "*king* who *killed*". This suggests that Samkelo constructed his belief of what it meant to be a man by conforming to the status quo of patriarchal masculinity, often associated with absolute control and violence.

The learners who asserted that Macbeth was more powerful appeared to have shaped their concept of masculinity based on Lady Macbeth's manipulation strategy. On the other hand, those who believed Lady Macbeth was more powerful commended her ability to influence him to commit murder.

The data from the interviews reflect similar findings as seven of the ten interviewed learners understood Lady Macbeth to be more powerful than Macbeth. Jenna remarked that,

> *It's Lady Macbeth because he* [Macbeth] *wasn't going to be so evil if it wasn't for his wife. Because his wife is the person who actually told him, if you don't do this, and manipulated him and emotionally blackmailed him and told him, you*

are not a man. And she weakened his manhood and for him, he had to fulfil it. So, I'd say Lady Macbeth is more powerful.

Jenna's understanding of Lady Macbeth's power lay in her recognition of the psychological manipulation Macbeth succumbed to. It seems that Jenna's recognition of the mental manipulation that Lady Macbeth employed based on the identity of a man in a patriarchal society suggests a message about the ideas of a man today. The data supported the open-ended questionnaire responses from learners who perceived Lady Macbeth as more powerful, signifying the acknowledgment that societal expectations regarding the behaviour of men and women can hinder the realisation of a cohesive and equal society. A clear example of this is when Jenna stated that Lady Macbeth "*told him you [Macbeth] are not a man and she weakened his manhood and he had to fulfil it"*, which shows that for as long as unequal dominant gender norms exist in society, men and women are potentially vulnerable to falling victim to the norms.

Nicole admired Lady Macbeth for her decisiveness as she stated that "*Lady Macbeth is more manipulative and she is more decisive, unlike Macbeth. I dislike Macbeth. If she says something, she's going to do it, not like Macbeth*". Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) noted that a reader-response approach enables the reader to negotiate meaning through the transaction of the text and maintains that the text does not have an objective, inherent meaning. In this case, Nicole expressed, "*I dislike Macbeth*", revealing a reading of the play influenced by a personal connection. She perceived Lady Macbeth as "*manipulative*" and emphasised her characteristic of being "*decisive*", perhaps identifying with and valuing these characteristics. Thus, the play is shaped according to Nicole's personal identity.

Ayanda also critiqued Macbeth for being a coward, stating that "*Macbeth was going to turn a blind eye to murder until Lady Macbeth weakened his manhood*". By noting that "*Lady Macbeth weakened his manhood*", it seems that Ayanda was alluding to Macbeth's agency in subscribing to the patriarchal expectations of a man to appease his wife. It is possible that Ayanda also implies that Lady Macbeth espoused a prescription upon Macbeth to weaken "*his manhood*", by enforcing ideas of ambition, physical courage, aggression, and resolute action in overcoming obstacles. Mohammed (2019) highlighted a potential issue with the aforementioned interpretations, cautioning that they could contribute to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and the suppression of female agency and social mobility. Such interpretations may reinforce the notion that power primarily emanates from men.

In the interviews, only three learners asserted that Macbeth was more powerful than Lady Macbeth. Max addressed a facet of the power dynamics between males and females in the play that others had not mentioned. Max believed that Macbeth was more powerful because he needed to ascend to the throne for Lady Macbeth to become queen. After achieving kingship, Max noted that Macbeth abused his power without reservation. Max stated that,

> *Macbeth is more powerful even though he does listen to his wife Lady Macbeth. Macbeth is powerful because he is the King of Scotland. He used his power without questions and abused it.*

It seems that Max suggested that Macbeth's authoritative position as *King of Scotland*bestowed power unto him in which he could maintain control of others through wicked ways without Lady Macbeth's influence. The significance of Max's identification alludes to the ideathat once one attains such high status, they are susceptible to corrupt social mechanisms to maintain their status as he added that "*he used his power without questions and abused it*".

Erin and Lungelo recognise that Lady Macbeth could not bring herself to murder, yet she was consumed by guilt at the end. Thus, Macbeth prevailed as more powerful according to them. Erin stated that,

> *I wanted to say Lady Macbeth, but she doesn't become that powerful at the end. It was Macbeth who, after becoming king, was more powerful. He killed and didn't need her.*

By stating that "*she doesn't become that powerful at the end*", it was evident that Erin's understanding of power was associated with asserting dominance which Lady Macbeth only succeeded in doing with Macbeth at the beginning of the play. This is supported in studies of the play by Ferdous (2017) and AlRaznah (2020) as they claimed that Lady Macbeth's conscience became consumed by guilt and destroyed her mind because she could not exceed male authority in a patriarchal society, therefore, her influence could only reach Macbeth in the realisation of their ambition**.** Lady Macbeth's power diminished as she reverted to a passive wife as Erin claimed that "*he killed and didn't need her*" and, as a result, Macbeth was more powerful. Lungelo's understanding supported Erin's claims as he stated that "*it was definitely Macbeth because he killed without question*". It seems that Lungelo believed that Macbeth was

powerful because he lacked a moral consciousness in the pursuit and maintenance of his ambition which was recognised as an issue of power. Lungelo reflected an understanding of power which seemed to represent character-altering traits as Macbeth changed from showing hesitation in the murder of Duncan because he felt it was immoral, but as soon as he attained kingship, committing murder became his natural method of maintaining his position. Lungelo alluded to the play's embedded narrative of powerful men being portrayed as violent beings.

Whilst learners critically engaged with who was the more powerful character in the play between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, the data did not clarify the reasons for their actionsof manipulation and murder, as pointed out in the responses above. Thus, in the open-ended questionnaire, learners were asked to engage with ideas that drove the actions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth in the play. The pie chart below indicates the learners' responses:

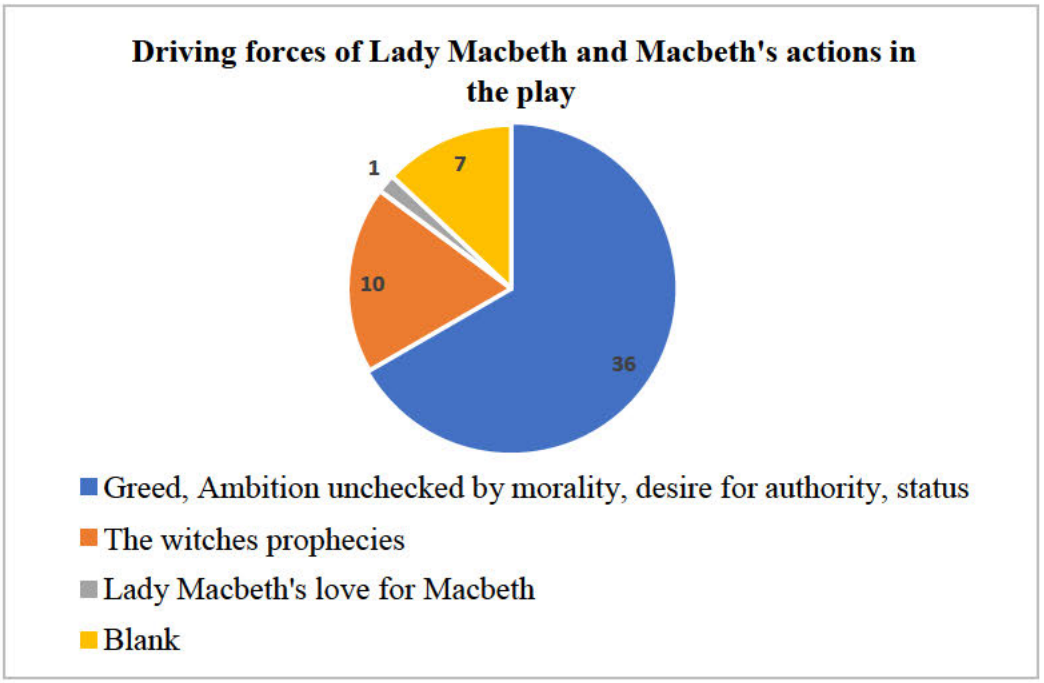


Figure 10: Driving forces of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth's actions in the play

When learners were asked about what drove the actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, 36 learners, including Jordan, engaged with an understanding of the issue of the desire to fulfil their ambition of attaining authority and status. Jordan stated that,

> *Lady Macbeth hated her already opulent life. She was greedy for more. The craving for authority/power. Lady Macbeth wanted to be the ruler so badly.*

Macbeth had a vaulting ambition, that consumed him, and Lady Macbeth used that as well.

Jordan's remark aligns with Kesur's (2014) perspective on a moral problem between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, which resulted in their engagement in political corruption. Jordan's understanding of power is linked to the idea of *authority,* as seeing it as a means for Lady Macbeth and Macbeth to attain greater wealth. The words "*greedy*", "*craving*", and "*consumed*" used by Jordan are also implied as inherent qualities that drive people to attain more power. Thus, her remark outlines the idea that for power to be sustained, more power needs to be attained for greater wealth. Furthermore, the words "*craving*" and "*consumed*" point to Jordan's understanding of how people can even lose their identity and strip themselves of their humanity as their lust for power intensifies, which can be seen in Lady Macbeth and Macbeth as they were never satisfied and made immoral choices that eventually consumed their entire lives.

Tate responded by exploring the danger of ambition unchecked by morals and their desire and obsession for the prophecies for Macbeth to become king to come true. Tate's recognition and understanding of the issues of power in Lady Macbeth and Macbeth that motivated them to commit heinous crimes was their "*ambition that goes unchecked by the concept of morality and the gratifying appearance of prophecies coming true*". It seems that Tate understood mankind's capacity for evil through ambition, as he stated that "*ambition that goes unchecked by the concept of morality*" was what drove the actions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. They knew that achieving their ambition was only possible through murder, deceit, and corruption and they had to act immorally. Tate alluded to the idea of people resorting to immoral choices because their ambition seemed unattainable, so they became evil. Furthermore, Tate also mentioned that the driving forces were the witches' prophecies, "*the gratifying appearance of prophecies coming true*", which immediately placed Lady Macbeth and Macbeth on the side of evil.

Anele also observed that ambition served as a driving force for the corruption of power in Lady Macbeth's and Macbeth's pursuit of status and authority. She added that Lady Macbeth, by provoking Macbeth's ambition, extended her own desires for power. Anele further mentioned that Macbeth's" *ambition for power, provoked also by Lady Macbeth, drove their actions in the play*".

Tate and Anele's assertions align with the arguments put forth by Hayat et al. (2021) in their study. According to Hayat et al., characters like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth serve as fundamental representations of basic human nature, rooted in the assumption that individuals need to be greedy and selfish when faced with ambitions beyond their reach. Therefore, these critical reflections initiate the process of learners recognising and understanding humanity's capacity for oppression and systemic injustices (Seider et al. 2021).

Martin and John put their understanding of greed and the desire for status at the forefront of their analysis as they claimed that the driving force of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth was their aim of reaching power and maintaining their positions. Martin used the words, "*the status of royalty and power*", whereas John remarked that their actions were because of "*their greed for power and wanting to remain in power for a long time*". The data suggests that learners recognise and understand that while ambition is a common characteristic in the play, it is the corruption of ambition that transforms the two characters. This corruption manifests through greed, lust, and immorality, becoming the central issue of power in the play.

From a total sample of 55 learners, 10 learners shared similar understandings of the witches who played a critical role in the inception of the corruption between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Thando claimed that "*the witches' prophecies drive their actions and that's where all the actions start*". Abigail and Lovisha concur, exclaiming that the witches "*control*" the two characters, and their actions are dictated by evil forces which, in turn, transform them into evil characters (Sorge, 2017).

Contrary to most responses, Jacky interpreted Lady Macbeth's actions as acts of devotion to her husband and believed him to be a weak man who needed to be provoked. Jacky remarked:

> *In my opinion, Lady Macbeth was driven by her love for her husband and a need to see him prosper taking it upon herself because she believed him to be weak. Macbeth was driven by his ambition and pure lust for power.*

Jacky's response suggests that the actions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth were propelled by the idea of love. Her understanding transforms the play into a tragic love story. Furthermore, Jacky alludes to the idea that Macbeth's actions could also be attempts at seeking validation from his wife. She suggests that Lady Macbeth breaches the traditional belief of a woman by taking charge of matters, stating that she took it upon herself to see Macbeth prosper.

In an intimate situation, Jacky reflects on the belief that romantic partners support each other's ambition, even if it seems wrong, a "*pure lust for power*". Her response also dismantles the idea of Lady Macbeth seeking power for herself through Macbeth, as he is positioned at the centre of the relationship but also conforms to a patriarchal dynamic.

Max and Lungelo opined that it is Lady Macbeth's and Macbeth's lust for power and the pursuit of royalty that drives their actions. Max offers insight into the idea of status by claiming that the power of the crown "*enables them to dictate and control Scotland*". Lungelo mentions that it was because of "*the crown … the power of the crown, she becomes queen if he becomes king*". The implication that Lady Macbeth could only attain social mobility through Macbeth is suggested by Lungelo.

The feeling of resentment by the learners toward the actions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth is evident in the responses of Kim as she bluntly associates their actions with greed, remarking that "*they are just greedy for more power*". The idea of discontentment recognised by Kim is reinforced by Alisha, who comments "*they would do anything for the power they craved*".

The interview responses delved into the motivations behind the actions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, revealing an exploration of ideas surrounding the overwhelming power of authority and the satisfaction derived from an insatiable greed for more power. Jenna expressed that "*they both craved authority and control because they were ambitious for it and would do anything for it*". It is evident that power is perceived as authority and control, which has the potential to make people go to dangerous lengths to achieve if it is "*craved*".

In the remaining five interviews, the learners appeared to face challenges in comprehending the term "driving forces". They repeated the words softly, showing difficulty in formulating a response. I endeavoured to clarify that driving forces encompass the motivations and reasons behind Lady Macbeth and Macbeth's actions in the play. However, this attempt yielded no response, as they requested to proceed to the next question. The absence of responses in this context may imply that learners struggled to grasp the question, evident from their confused state. However, even after offering clarification, they chose to move on. This might suggest that the actions of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth appeared normal to them in the context of their lives, and the nuances of power issues in their actions could not be recognised.

6.2.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Learners' perspectives on the power to rule through Duncan and Macbeth

In the previous sub-sections, the learners engaged with the ideas of power from the perspectives of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. They recognised that while an array of power dynamics was evident in the play, the goal for them was to attain the power to rule over Scotland. An inquiry was conducted to determine how the learners grappled with the idea of the power to rule, examining the roles of the two kings in the play, namely Duncan and Macbeth. This exploration offered insights into their understanding of power as a position of leadership.

In the open-ended questionnaire, the learners were asked to consider who was the more powerful ruler between Duncan and Macbeth. The bar graph presented in Figure 11 below represents the learners' responses.

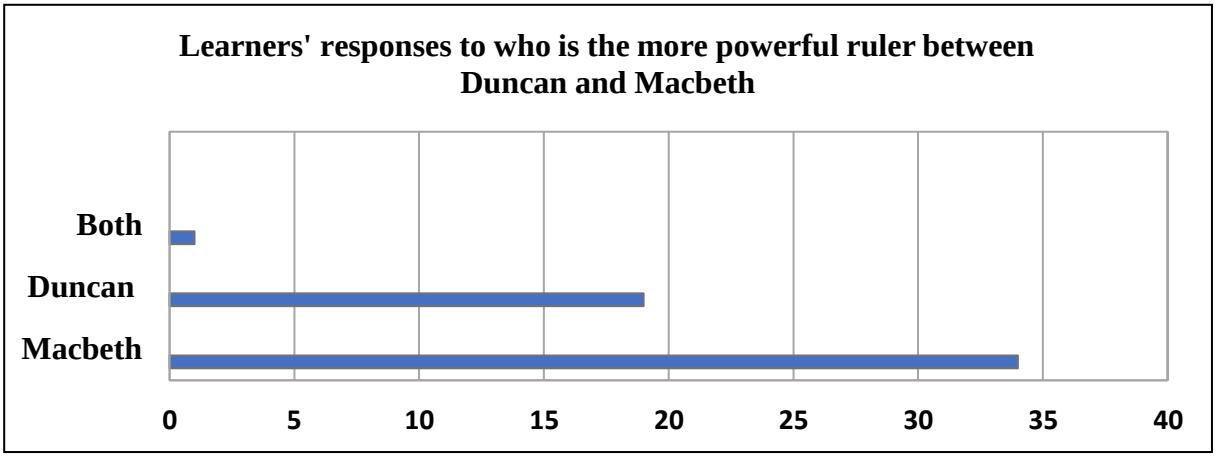


Figure 11: Learners' responses to who is the more powerful ruler between Duncan and Macbeth

A total of 55 learners responded to the question, with 34 learners recognising Macbeth as the more powerful ruler. Learners like Tate outlined that "*Macbeth's ability to rule over Scotland by force made him formidable and difficult to defeat, unlike Duncan*".

Chris also chose Macbeth as a more powerful ruler because he killed people. She stated that,

> *Macbeth was most powerful; he was able to take charge and murder anyone who stood in his way of keeping power. He was brave enough to kill and had support from the witches and his wife.*

The position of power, according to Chris, is not absolute and can be taken away. She asserted that Macbeth aimed to "*murder anyone who stood in his way of keeping power*". Her response suggests that the position of the powerholder is contested by others who seek to advance themselves. This parallels high-ranking political positions in society, where individuals in governance often engage in fierce contests through elections and manifestos. The political arena can be perceived as a domain plagued by the struggle for power because itis associated with status, wealth, and control, resembling the position of the king in the play. As long as power remains intertwined with political positions, the constant threat to these positions persists. Chris interprets Macbeth's political power in a brutal and immoral sense asshe states that "*he was brave enough to kill*" to maintain power. The use of the word "brave" by Chris suggests her recognition of the extreme measures Macbeth took to preserve his power.It alludes to his departure from his social obligation to lead justly, indicating a willingness to face the consequences without fear. Her construction of power in the political domain is not uncommon considering the historical political identity of South Africa as many incidents of killings and other forms of brutality characterised governance during apartheid (Stuurman, 2018; Gukelberger, 2020).

The learners asserted that the capacity to commit murder was a powerful trait possessed by Macbeth. However, it was also acknowledged that Duncan had ordered the death of a traitor. It appears that the learners believe that murder might be deemed acceptable in certain circumstances but not in others. Alex pointed out that Macbeth employed evil to fuel his ambition and to instil fear among the people he governed. Alex's perspective suggests that once harnessed, evil can make an individual a formidable leader, as he indicates that,

> *Macbeth was the most powerful ruler because he gained more power into evil which made him grow as a none fearing man. In his kingdom, he was not admired because they knew it was not easy to attack him.*

Alex acknowledged that Macbeth gained confidence through his association with evil forces. It is evident that Alex perceives evil as a potent force when harnessed by humans, challenging the natural dynamics of the world, as the witches led Macbeth to believe. Alex also draws on Macbeth's alienation from the rest of the kingdom by stating that "*he was not admired because they knew it was not easy to attack him*", which could suggest that the tyrannical force

with which Macbeth ruled over Scotland increased his list of enemies but also made him a difficult target as he maintained power through evil and murder.

Siya offered insight into Macbeth's power by highlighting his insatiable ambition, even in situations that appeared beyond his control. Siya commended Macbeth for persisting in his quest to become king and contrasted him with Malcolm, noting that "*Macbeth's strength of his vaulting ambition when Malcolm was named heir to the throne he wrestled with his conscience and morals to achieve his ambition*".

Fewer learners (19 out of 55) chose Duncan as a more powerful ruler. The learners described him as a good king and a symbol of moral virtue, representing order.

Asanda articulated that Duncan is a rightful king who symbolises order in Scotland, emphasising that,

> *Duncan is a model of a virtuous, benevolent, and kind ruler. His death symbolises the destruction of an order in Scotland that can be restored only when Malcolm occupies the throne.*

It seems that Asanda recognises the power to rule in terms of maintaining the status quo. Interestingly, her response hints at the idea that the power to rule is designated to specific individuals aligned with a political lineage for governance. This implies that she believes that the power to rule is assigned to an exclusive group of people, thus restricting the political will of others. She deems this idea as "*order*", which, given the context of the play, is appropriate since Macbeth's actions brought about disorder in Scotland.

Similarly, Anele also deemed Duncan as more powerful because she recognised him to be "*gracious*". She appreciated his "*honesty*" and "*trustworthiness*". Eve added that Duncan was a *good king*, and he could have ruled over Scotland fairly. Macbeth became a ruler because of "*his ambition and desire for power*", which is not appreciated by Eve.

Contrastingly, Jordan acknowledges that power has dual purposes: good and evil. The abuse of power is recognised, and Jordan understands that they were both powerful rulers, but Macbeth abused his power as a ruler. Jordan stated that "*both were powerful. Duncan just never abused his power the way Macbeth did*".

Moreover, Nicole and Charles, noting Duncan's brief appearances in the play, conclude that he lacked power due to the limited information available about him. Charles stated, "*Duncan was easily manipulated by Macbeth*", drawing parallels to the power of mental

manipulation in the pursuit of power and control, as previously explored in the power dynamic between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. After being granted the title of Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth mentally grappled with the desire to usurp the throne from the one who bestowed it upon him but had not yet acted on it. Charles's recognition of Macbeth's manipulation of Duncan comes follows Macbeth's own manipulation by Lady Macbeth. Therefore, Macbeth can be comprehended as a character who, under the influence of toxic ambition for power, was initially manipulated and later transformed into a manipulator.

Macbeth is deemed more powerful. Nicole adds that "*Macbeth knows what he wants, and he can go to a certain point to get what he wants, doesn't matter the cause or consequences. He is determined*". Nicole does not say that Macbeth is a powerful ruler, but she does offer insights into Macbeth's character, which suggest that she recognises him as a more powerful ruler.

Interestingly, Charles added that "*Duncan got killed by Macbeth whom he gave too much power".* Charles's statement reflects Mohammed's (2019) assertion that Macbeth's craving for absolute power led to dissatisfaction and, in the end, brought chaos to Scotland. Duncan's kind nature, according to Mohammed (2019), may not have perceived this, as he misjudgedMacbeth's physical prowess on the battlefield as a sign of loyalty.

Lungelo was the only learner who chose Duncan by recognising that manipulation manifested from many fronts in Macbeth's life, thus making him less powerful than Duncan. Lungelo stated that "*Duncan is the one who was more powerful because the reason why Macbeth was powerful is because of the three witches and Lady Macbeth by his side".* It appears that Lungelo comprehends the power to rule as residing in the ruler's capacity to maintain control over their actions. In other words, Lungelo may be implying that Macbeth never autonomously governed Scotland. Instead, the three witches and Lady Macbeth wielded influence over Macbeth, who, in turn, ruled over Scotland, leading to his compromised agency.

The learners' exploration of the power dynamics in the play (*Macbeth*) facilitated a critical assessment of the characters of Duncan and Macbeth. This examination revealed both their strengths and weaknesses, shedding light on the factors that rendered them powerful or powerless as leaders. Within this theme, the learners highlighted the significance of evaluating

the tyrannical power wielded by Macbeth in terms of social dominance. By fostering discussions that prompt an examination of the dangers of tyrannical power in the political sphere, as reflected in the learners' responses to Macbeth's character as a ruler, there is potential

for them to cultivate awareness and understanding of the dynamics of power in political structures. This, in turn, may contribute to their development as active and informed citizens.

Thus, the diagram below represents learners' justifications for their choices between Macbeth and Duncan as the more powerful ruler.

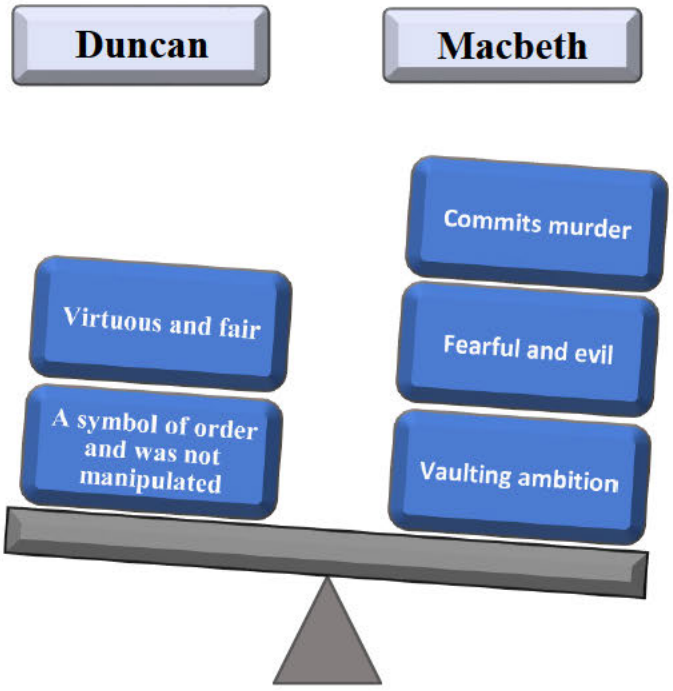


Figure 12: Learners' choices of the most powerful ruler

6.2.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Learners' engagement with qualities of leadership in the play, Macbeth

Building on the learners' exploration of the power to rule as portrayed in the play through the characters of Duncan and Macbeth, the open-ended questionnaire aimed to delve into the learners' acknowledgment and comprehension of leadership qualities they admired in the narrative. Thirteen learners recognised admirable leadership qualities in Malcolm and Macduff. Max wrote that it was "*the bravery of Macduff and Malcolm to avenge their family's murders. That's being brave and responsible*". He also added that they had a responsibility to avenge the death of their family members under the tyranny of Macbeth's leadership. Brian admires the "*wisdom*" that was associated with "*standing up against Macbeth*". Similarly, Josh stated that "*Macbeth's injustices were stood up against by Macduff*".

The data from their responses indicates that they acknowledge positive leadership characterised by a commitment to combating injustices and corruption. Learners commonly used adjectives to describe the actions of Macduff and Malcolm in the play when they chose to confront Macbeth. They used words such as “brave”, “responsible”, “standing-up”, and “stood-up”, which could imply that they recognise that social injustices at the hands of tyrannical agents need to be countered.

Learners' exploration of the political agency of Macduff and Malcolm within the context of the play aligns with Freire's (2012, p. 109) observation on critical consciousness as the "deepening of the attitude of awareness" regarding social conditions and issues. Learners read *against* the text’s literary elements to uncover the capacity and will of Macduff and Malcolm to challenge oppressive social arrangements and structures (Seider et al., 2021; Jemal, 2017; Freire, 2012). In doing so, learners surpassed the conventional interpretation of the text.

Ten learners admired the leadership qualities of Macbeth. Chris recognised Macbeth’s bravery before he turned evil, stating that,

> *Brave Macbeth before he was self-doubting and evil but then Shakespeare uses him to show the terrible effects that ambition and guilt can have on a man who lacks the strength of character.*

Insights into learners' perceptions of leadership, exemplified by Chris's acknowledgment of Macbeth, reveal an understanding that Macbeth was deemed admirable during his time on the battlefield fighting for Scotland. She critiques his weakness of character upon receiving the political injection to become king, which tarnishes the admirable qualities Chris initially recognised. Importantly, she learned from Shakespeare's portrayal of Macbeth that “*ambition and guilt*” can become destructive to one’s conscience if one “*lacks the strength of character*”. She has not only taken lessons from Macbeth when he was admirable on the battlefield but also uses his weak character as a lesson to avoid. Her understanding of leadership entails having a strong character to deal with the power of ambition so that it does not alter one’s character.

Similarly, Abigail stated that she “*admired him for fighting for Scotland and he was brave and honourable before he became evil and killed for power*”. Sam reflects on the quality of leadership others did not recognise in Macbeth “*when he had doubts about killing Duncan*”. Sam recognised Macbeth’s nobility and realisation that murdering the King of Scotland was wrong. Sam highlights that Macbeth “*had doubts about killing Duncan*”, implying that even

Macbeth himself might have known that Duncan did not deserve to be killed as he was a good king. It is conceivable that Sam recognised leadership qualities in Macbeth by acknowledging his role as a loyal kinsman and resisting the temptation of ambition, becoming aware of the injustice of his actions to commit regicide.

The data clearly indicates a shift in the perception of Macbeth, with learners no longer viewing him as a good leader. This observation holds significance in deciphering their beliefs about leadership. Their responses suggest the notion that one should not need to compromise their character to assume a leadership role. Furthermore, it implies that the acquisition of power has the potential to corrupt one's character.

Seven out of 55 learners responded by acknowledging Duncan as an admirable leader. Thando recognised that Duncan was an admirable leader because he was "*honest* and *loyal*". Mathew and Mark admired Duncan for his loyalty and faithfulness for the greater good, recognising these qualities in him. Mathew remarked, "*Duncan was loyal to Scotland and faithful to the kingdom*". Mark used the word "*admire*" when mentioning that Duncan did not betray anyone. The learners draw on their understanding of values and characteristics about the representation of Duncan, a practice encouraged in CLP. The learners are guided to move beyond traditional readings of the text that focus solely on understanding the plot and characters. Instead, they are encouraged to engage in readings of the text that enables them to analyse representations and construct their knowledge (Borksheim-Black et al., 2014). Furthermore, the learners highlight their beliefs about loyalty, faithfulness, and honesty, so that they can associate them with the representation of Duncan and other characters that follow. It seems that the learners draw on their beliefs about the qualities of a leader who is concerned with the welfare of people in society, which is important when considering issues of social justice and power. A leader who embodies qualities of loyalty, faithfulness, and honesty maintains the integrity of their position and recognises a broader responsibility to serve society rather than succumbing to selfish ambition. By considering the portrayal of Duncan, the learners have the opportunity to emulate his attributes as a leader in their own lives, aspiring to become leaders of integrity.

Only two learners acknowledged admirable leadership qualities in Lady Macbeth. Amahle identified Lady Macbeth's intelligence as an admirable leadership quality, recognising her ability to orchestrate plans for murder and strategically influence Macbeth. Amahle used words like "*strategic and critical thinking, I admire her brain, she got what she wanted by using everyone else*". Smangele echoed a similar perspective as she admired the leadership in

Lady Macbeth's devious organisation of the murder of Duncan by using her husband. The attributes of intelligence, strategy, and critical thinking were notably absent in the portrayal of male characters such as Duncan and Macbeth, who were formerly labelled as leaders in the context of the play.

Amahle and Smangele, as female learners, challenge the male-centric interpretation of the play by emphasising significant leadership qualities embodied by Lady Macbeth. While the connection between the gender of these learners might suggest a potential influence on recognising admirable qualities in Lady Macbeth, the limited data available in this regard does not warrant a conclusive interpretation. It is crucial to acknowledge that in the society depicted in the play, women were not granted leadership positions due to the prevailing belief in their inferiority to men. However, Lady Macbeth's portrayal challenges such narratives and has the potential to inspire young women like Amahle and Smangele to believe in their own leadership qualities, rejecting the notion of inherent inferiority to men.

Four learners agreed that there are no admirable qualities of leadership in the play. Ayanda did not recognise any qualities of leadership that are admirable in the portrayal of characters in the play. She recognised that cowardice and the abuse of power are evident in the play. More importantly, she recognised that some leaders did not have power, alluding to the power to fight against evil. She said that "*there are none. Macbeth was a tyrant and Malcolm was a coward. Everyone either misused their power or didn't have the power to be good leaders*". Her statement calls into question the flaws of all the characters in the play.

Eve and Dennis also noted that they could not find any admirable qualities of leadership in the play because of either corruption or cowardice. Eve stated that "*all the characters were evil and did not possess good qualities because they were corrupt*", while Dennis claimed that "*all the characters had weaknesses*". For the learners mentioned above, it is possible that the portrayal of leadership qualities in the play does not align with their personal ideas of leadership. This connection underscores the principle of reader-response in CLP (Borksheim-Black et al., 2014). In accordance with the principle of reader-response, the learners drew on their understanding of leadership qualities to recognise that *corruption*, *evil*, and *cowardice* are evident in the play, contributing to the downfall of leaders in powerful positions.

Eighteen learners did not respond to this question in the open-ended questionnaire. The eighteen blanks could be an indication that, just like Ayanda, Eve and Dennis, they did not find any admirable qualities of leadership in the play, or they did not understand the question itself.

In the interviews, Jenna is responsible enough to merge qualities of leadership that she admired from different characters. Some characters had admirable qualities but lacked other important qualities. Jenna admired the "*determination and ambition of Macbeth*" but was quick to caution herself by saying "*Duncan was a kind ruler*". Lungelo discussed the transformation in Macbeth, highlighting him as a dynamic character who underwent change. He expressed admiration for Macbeth's bravery before his descent into evil, a sentiment shared by Chris in the questionnaire.

Within this theme, the data signifies that learners only sought to recognise virtuous leadership qualities in various characters and critiqued negative leadership qualities. Interestingly, they were able to separate negative qualities of leadership among characters who became corrupt and evil through the misuse of power, which signified the principle of reading *against* the text's literary elements and engaging in a reader-response approach (Borksheim-Black et al., 2014). Learners may recognise and understand that power can change individuals from being virtuous to becoming evil either through the ambition for power or the attainment of more power.

Therefore, the diagram below delineates the leadership qualities admired by the learners in the play and indicates which character exemplified these qualities:

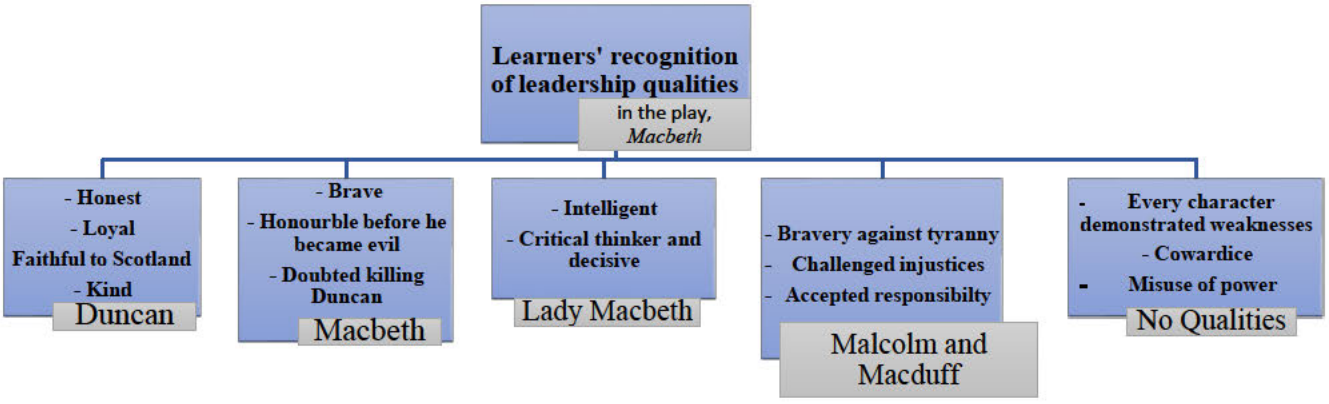


Figure 13: Learners' recognition of leadership qualities

6.3 Theme 2: Learners' Engagement with Issues of Power in Their Everyday Lives in Relation to the Play, *Macbeth*

The data production method addressed the following:

Table 3: Recap of RQ 2 and Objective 2

Research Question 2	Objective 2
How do learners in two Grade 11 classes relate issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, to issues of power in their lives?	To understand how learners in two Grade 11 classes relate issues of power in the play, Macbeth, to issues of power in their lives.

The findings of this theme are discussed in the following sub-themes:

6.3.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Learners' exploring power in political and social settings: Government and school

In the open-ended questionnaire, learners were asked to provide examples of power they see or experience in their lives.

Seven learners critically reflected on the issues of power within the political domain. Asanda used words like "*order laws*", "*dictate*", and "*wealthy or rich and have power over people*" to indicate political oppression of people. Her expressions depict the government as an oppressive regime, rather than a democracy. Her experiences are far from the ideals of democracy and lean more toward the totalitarianism of the government just like the one ruled by Macbeth in the play, especially when she states that "*not much has changed, there is still a division between rich and poor*".

Ayanda's perspectives on the government and its power might have been influenced by her personal encounters with social injustice or her observations of social injustice in the lives of others in South Africa. Freire (1970) argued that the cultivation of learners' political agency through their educational journey is crucial for transforming the injustices they encounter or witness in society. In alignment with Freire's (1970) belief, Asanda's heightened awareness of issues related to economic inequality, fostered through her engagement with the play, becomes pivotal in catalysing a citizenry that advocates for democracy. The fact that she stated "*not*

much has changed" implies that she believes that little has been done to transform the lives of those who were economically oppressed during apartheid.

Sam echoed similar views, asserting that politicians relish the power of control. However, he added that the pursuit of power by individuals in government is motivated by the acquisition of wealth, and wealth facilitates control. Sam's response highlighted that "*politicians have power in society and the government also has power since they are rich and wealthy*". The link between power and wealth is established by Sam who suggests that since politicians in high positions of power are wealthy, their wealth allows them to access the resources for the potential attainment of more wealth. Thus, if one's financial resources are limited, the pool of resources at one's disposal to change one's financial circumstance is limited and the pursuit of a position of power becomes the only way out of the cycle.

This perspective may stem from the learners' comprehension of Macbeth's ambition to seize power in Scotland, drawing connections to their experiences of power in government. Freund (2007) and Bond (2019) argued that the inception of democracy in South Africa paved the way for legal reforms meant to elevate economically marginalised racial groups that suffered during apartheid, making these issues more prominent. However, they added that only the political elite reaped the benefits of legislation like Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). Concerning the data, Sam may relate Macbeth's pursuit of political power to advance himself (Macbeth) with his view of the attainment of political positions of power for economic transformation.

Tom and Jack used words like "*control*" and "*punish*" to suggest that the government acts upon those who do not adhere to the laws imposed by politicians on citizens. Jordan similarly expressed the idea that the government is authoritative, and citizens should comply with laws. He reflects on the COVID-19 pandemic, when everyone had been instructed to wear masks as ordered by the government. Jordan stated that "*the government has power over the whole land, and the president can command everyone to obey laws and wear masks*".

The responses of the seven learners may suggest a relationship between issues of power in the government and Macbeth's power to rule. Based on the data, it is evident that learners feel that transformation is needed. However, it seems that they may lack the agency to actively address their concerns about issues of power at a political level. Nonetheless, by expressing their views, they indicate a heightened consciousness that has the potential to pave the way for transformation. Building on Freire's (1970) notion of praxis, which views the classroom as a space fostering a responsibility in learners to actively contribute to creating a more just world

rather than merely studying the world, positions the play (*Macbeth*) in a crucial role as a proponent of social justice, as evidenced in the data above.

In the interviews, two learners shared similar views about issues of power in government. Erin reflected on the state of governance of the world and how the "*leadership of states are failing*". She says that presidents have the power to make countries better places, but they do not. She added:

> *They [leaders in government] just want to keep the power all to themselves, they want to stay above other people so that they can keep making people in that country more oppressed and at a lower level, so they are always at the top.*

Considering her starting point that the "*leadership of states are failing*", it is evident that Erin believes that the government has no intention to advance the interests of the people that they govern and ensure a better quality of life for all. Rather, government leaders protect their interests, as power can be taken away, and preserving their power is crucial to sustaining wealth, as she added that "*they want to stay above other people*". It is possible that Erin's political view of power draws on the positions of authority individuals in government hold, creating a hierarchical structure in society that is not concerned with counting everyone as equals. She adds that people in government seek to maintain their superior status by "*making people in that country more oppressed and at a lower level, so they are always at the top*". Erin could be implying that power in the political arena works as a strategy that maintains the identity of the oppressed and the oppressor. Freire (2012) believed that oppression dehumanised everyone, both the oppressor and the oppressed, and that emancipatory forms of politics that strive for freedom and justice are, ultimately, a demand.

Kim further supports Erin's views by stating that,

> *We see a whole lot of corruption, with tenders and people becoming more political. They have money and lots of things. Like with the crime that happens here, you see that people don't usually go to jail as often or stay behind bars for as long as they should because they have the power to just bribe people and get out of situations.*

Based on Kim's response, people are *becoming more political,* so that they too can become wealthy and powerful. Politics is seen as a portal to attain wealth and exploit the justice system. Building on Erin's political view of power, characterised by oppressive strategies on economic and social fronts, Kim suggests that individuals align themselves with powerful politicians as a means to liberate themselves from such oppression. Freire (1970) indirectly referred to Kim's understanding of political power when he noted the peril that an oppressed individual, aspiring for freedom, might succumb to the belief that to be free, they must adopt the role of the oppressor. Kim's assertion that "*people don't usually go to jail*" could imply that exploiting one's power or influential connections in government raises concerns about social justice, as perpetrators continue to coexist with their victims. Kim criticises the poor justice system that is weakened by corruption in the form of bribes. When she was asked if she believed that South Africa achieved the principles of democracy and equality it set out to achieve, she remarked the following:

> *I do not think that we have achieved equality in the sense of wealth, we just have the status or title of equality. It [South Africa] is a society of, I can say, a hierarchy where there are different classes of wealth, and the lower class and middle class consist of non-whites. Change only occurred mostly in politicians but they are corrupt. They want power for themselves.*

By stating that "*I do not think that we have achieved equality in the sense of wealth"*, Kim implies that economic transformation remains an unfulfilled commitment by the democratic South African government. This perspective may stem from her personal experiences or observations of the prevailing wealth gap in society. She added that "*we just have the status or title of equality*", which stresses the importance of tangible economic solutions for answering the needs of the historically marginalised people who seek a better life. Moreover, Kim alludes to the reality that the equality articulated in policy and legislation documents does not necessarily translate into economic transformation. Thistransformation is contingent upon the presence of political will to instigate change in a societylike South Africa, which is marked by distinct classes of wealth, with the "*lower class andmiddle class consist*[ing] *of non-whites*". Kim might be highlighting that wealth and power areclosely linked to race, reflecting the structure of the apartheid system, which appears to remain unchanged.

The data signifies what Gulgoz (2015) emphasised regarding the importance of understanding power differences and how society is organised based on features of a social hierarchy based on status and wealth. It is evident that Kim realises that knowledge about social and political structures is historically and socially rooted, ordered and structured in specific ways (McLaren, 2019). This realisation aligns with Giroux's (1984) call for a counterhegemonic condition of learning that opposes the neutrality of education, which may otherwise neglect the representation of social groups.

Wealth as a source of power in the civic arena was explicated by Chatterjee (2019) who believed that inequality of wealth leads to an array of social issues such as crime, corruption of governance due to power struggles, and high mortality rates, among others. Kim's lived experiences on the issues of power within the government's ability to rule do relate to issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*.

The learners were tasked with reflecting on their feelings regarding issues of power in their lives through a visual drawing. In Asanda's illustration, a dog is depicted being chained, symbolising a citizen. Instead of representing a citizen as a human, Asanda chose to draw a dog. This choice may imply that the relationship between citizens and the government can be likened to the relationship between a dog and its master, suggesting a dynamic where citizens are under the control of the government. The chain and ball depicted in the drawing symbolise the government, suggesting Asanda's perception of the government as a constraining force. The closed eyes and tears expressed by the dog convey a sense of despair, hinting at the bleak prospect of breaking free from the chains that keep her captive.

Furthermore, she expresses a lack of hope in the government, believing that it is solely up to her to forge a better future. However, the key, symbolising the means for change, is drawn behind her and out of her reach, indicating the significant difficulty associated with altering her situation. The presence of the key as a representation of *knowledge* implies that the government also imposes restrictions on the knowledge she can possess. McLaren (2016) alludes to Asanda's idea of restricted knowledge when he states that dominant groups can condition how subordinate groups live and respond to their cultural system and lived experiences.

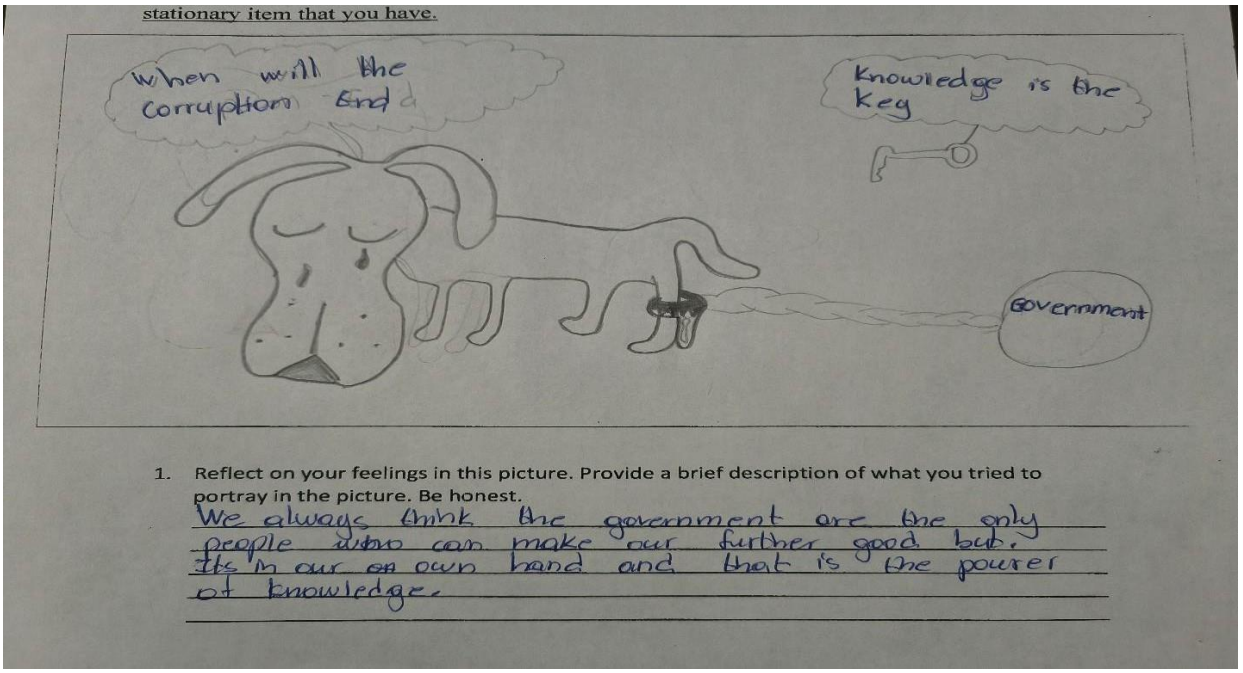


Figure 14: Visual Representation 1

She believes that the power of education (*knowledge*) is the key to a better future. Her written explanations imply that she does not have faith in the government to create conditions for her success, as government leaders are represented as a restricting and oppressive force. Illustrating herself, a citizen, as a dog suggests that the feeling of oppression by the government is dehumanising. Ross (2018) pointed out that by applying critical pedagogy, learners realise that the circumstances in which they live are not static and the idea of agency to transform their situation becomes what Freire (1970) termed as the opportunity for dehumanisation to be achieved.

In another response to the visual task, Victor illustrated a scale that represents the justice system. However, the weight of corruption is heavier than the weight of the crime. Victor implies that corruption obstructs the justice system from dealing with crime and therefore an increase in crime is evident in his illustration because criminals know that they can get away. In his written reflection, Victor remarks that criminals have the means to *silence*people in positions to persecute them in the form of bribes and other forms of corruption. He maintains his faith in the justice system and goes on to relate his views to the play by stating that "*Macbeth even though he had power and committed crimes, he thought he was never goingto be defeated, but in the end … he was defeated*". He believes in the power of the law and argues that people in powerful positions should respect the law.

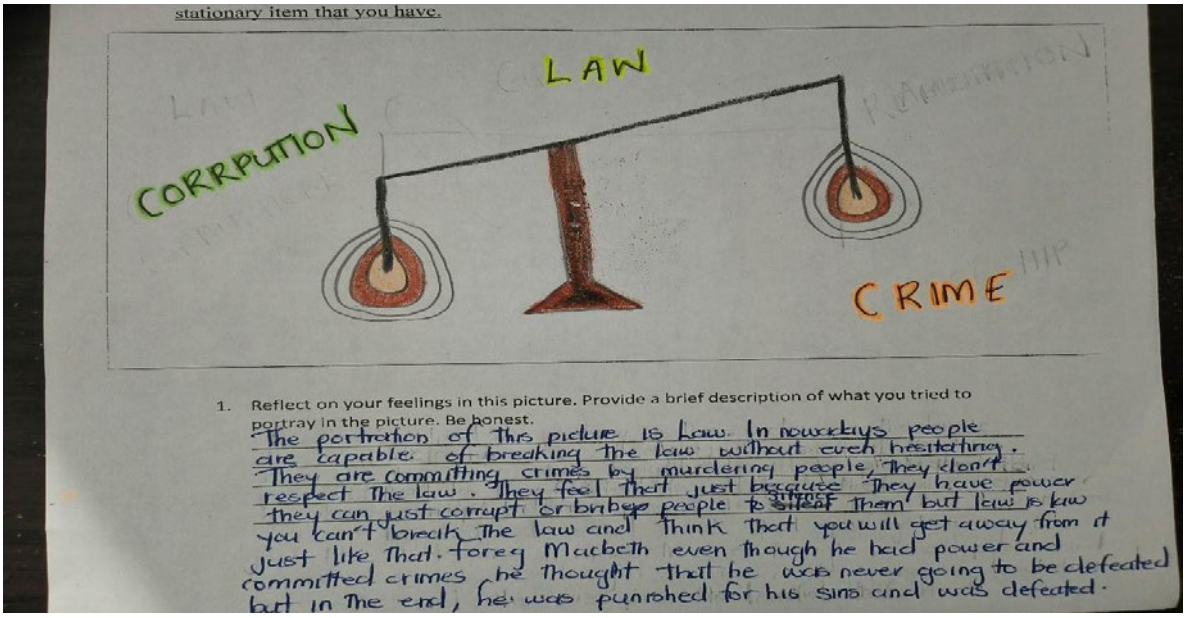


Figure 15: Visual Representation 2

In keeping with Freire's (1970) notion of dehumanisation, Victor believes that the law has the potential to equalise society. Mayo (2012) adds that through critical reflection, learners see the world not for what it is, but what it should be.

In the open-ended questionnaire, seventeen learners engaged with issues of power they experienced at school.

Tate expressed his experiences of being "*commanded and ruled over*" by their teachers. These issues of power can manifest in cruel forms of "*punishment*" that learners such as Tate are aware of. He stated that,

> *At school, the principal and teachers have power over all of us and they can decide what they want to do to us. We can be punished if we disobey school rules and teachers can command us.*

From Tate's experiences, it is evident that he perceives power to be only in one set of hands at school. Stating that "*they can decide what they want to do to us*" suggests that his powerlessness lies in his stifled agency to do what he wants to do. He used words such as "*they can decide*", "*be punished*", and "*can command us*" to drive the point that he feels afraid and powerless to deviate from the authority and control of teachers and the principal at his school. He also mentions that disobeying the "*school rules*" could lead him into trouble. Tate's remark raises concerns about the "*school rules*" and the power wielded by teachers, derived from these

rules. The data highlights a division in power relations between teachers and learners. As one of the teachers at the school, it becomes even more crucial to transform my classroom into a critical pedagogical space, aiming to dispel such power imbalances.

Giroux (1988) argues that the critical pedagogical classroom encourages a new discourse that challenges the traditional views of schooling which is believed by Freire (1970) to be an experience that sees teachers and learners as agents actively involved in constructing meaning together. Thus, learners like Tate realise that they can also contribute to knowledge as equals in the classroom.

Hughes (1993) describes the potential for teachers' legitimate power of authority to be exploited, as alluded to by Tate, who used oppressive words to describe his experience of issues of power at school. Freire (1970) also cautions teachers to examine the power relations they have with learners as it may impose prescriptions about authoritative power in society. Alisha provides insight into her experience with the principal, being at the helm of the schooling institution, and holding the power to determine consequences for learners deviating from school rules. She states, "*the principal punishes learners who disobey school rules*".

While Tate and Alisha did not explicitly specify the details of the punishment that the principal and teachers could inflict on them, their responses offer insight into their understanding of the hierarchical structure of power in the schooling system. According to their experiences, this structure positions them at a level in the hierarchy as passive followers of rules enforced upon them.

In addition, according to Gulgoz (2015), power differences organise social relations across species. It is evident from the data that any defiance or resistance to the "*rules*" will lead to "*punishment*". This is emphasised by Henry who believes that he is "*commanded by teachers who have all the authority to do what they want*". Henry's choice of words, "*to do what they want*", indicates that such teachers are irresponsible, and their authority is unchecked. Learners used common words such as "*commanded, rules* and *punishment*", which seem to be repeated in this section when they engage with issues of power at school.

Based on the learners' responses, it is apparent that their experience of power wielded by teachers is marked by fear and limitations imposed by rules. This underscores the increasing significance of the critical pedagogical classroom, offering learners an opportunity to engage in learning that is free from judgement, fear, and punishment. Moreover, it works to dismantle the privileged positions of authority that teachers might otherwise exploit (Giroux, 2010). The data suggest that learners felt free and safe to share their ideas about their negative schooling

experiences with me, therefore affirming the effectiveness of teaching within the critical pedagogy framework.

In the interviews, three learners spoke about examples of the power that they see and experience at school. Ayanda mentioned peer pressure, sharing his experience of seeing "*learners wanting to fit in, to achieve status in schools*". Ayanda says that "*behind these learners there are bullies who control them*". The power of bullying and peer pressure in schools creates a vicious cycle that gives rise to new bullies and new victims. Ayanda's response within this theme contributes to an understanding that learners encounter issues of power not only from teachers in the classroom but also from peers in the social domain. This exposure could condition them to believe that there is power in exploiting others rather than being exploited in the future as adults in society. Horton (2019) and Steyn and Singh (2018) discovered that victims often seek safety by becoming bullies themselves. Those who do not follow this path and continue to be victims may suffer psychologically, which could potentially lead to severe consequences such as suicide.

While Alisha can exert control over her life, she cannot say the same for her younger brother, who experiences bullying. She sympathises with the fact that he becomes emotional when he does not fit in, often succumbing to manipulation by peers. Her reason for resisting the influences of power lies in "*differentiating between right and wrong*", a crucial aspect of having a heightened consciousness and understanding of power relations in society. This awareness enables one to avoid the peril of being exploited by others. Alisha's resistance represents a commendable trait that other learners should emulate to empower themselves. Additionally, she highlights the use of emotional manipulation and words as tools of power used by bullies to exploit their victims. She remarked:

> *I have not experienced bullying or peer pressure because I can differentiate between right and wrong, but my brother, yeah… he's easily manipulated in school, and he gets very emotional when his friends say bad things about him. So basically, they control his emotions. So, he always wants to like fit into that whole standard.*

In another interview, Erin spoke about teachers who abuse their legitimate power. She stated that,

Teachers have the power to control a large number of learners and educate them, but I feel like sometimes they abuse it. They ask us [learners] to do things that are not like a part of the school, you can say curriculum or that subject specifically. They try to make friends with learners, it's okay, but there is a boundary. I feel like sometimes teachers can abuse their power.

Erin exhibits a sense of vulnerability concerning the power that teachers use to exploit learners. Her choice of words, such as "*they ask us*", reflects a personal connection, and she acknowledges that this practice is wrong. The abuse of power by these teachers implies that they predominantly operate within the banking model of education, creating unprofessional situations for learners to navigate through in order to learn. Erin recognises that the abuse of teachers' legitimate power constitutes an issue of power.

De Wet (2020) paints a bleak picture of teachers who abuse their legitimate power of authority in a South African context, highlighting instances where teachers become perpetrators of illegal relations with learners. This suggestion aligns with Erin's mention of the importance of maintaining a *boundary.* Within the principles of critical pedagogy, Grant and Gillette (2006) reinforce the idea of the teacher being aware of the context within which s/he teaches to be a truly effective teacher. Moreover, the teacher needs to know his/her roles, responsibilities, and ethical behaviour expected of the profession. Within a critical pedagogy classroom, learners need to know that it is more than an abuse of power. It is illegal and needs to be reported. Learners should never feel this way.

The only way for learners to be more aware of these social constructions of power relationships is by meaningful discourse which should be encouraged within the classroom, harnessing critical thinking.

In the visual task, two learners illustrated their responses to issues of power they experience at school. Max drew an illustration that depicts the power of bullies. They have the power to make people take their own lives. Max believes that they are heartless. He draws a crown which relates to the play and Macbeth's pursuit of the power of kingship which exposed him as a tyrant. Similarly, Max placed the crown above the word "*BULLY*", which signifies the extreme power that bullies have over their victims and affords them a higher status. The word "*EVIL*" is written on the crown, which represents Max's awareness that the power bullies possess is negative. Within this theme, the illustration represents the challenges that learners have to navigate in their daily lives at school. The critical pedagogy classroom should empower

learners by engaging in dialogue about issues such as bullying so that they can successfully navigate the social world by dismantling the belief that bullies have power over others. Learners should be empowered to believe that power is given to bullies and that needs to be resisted.

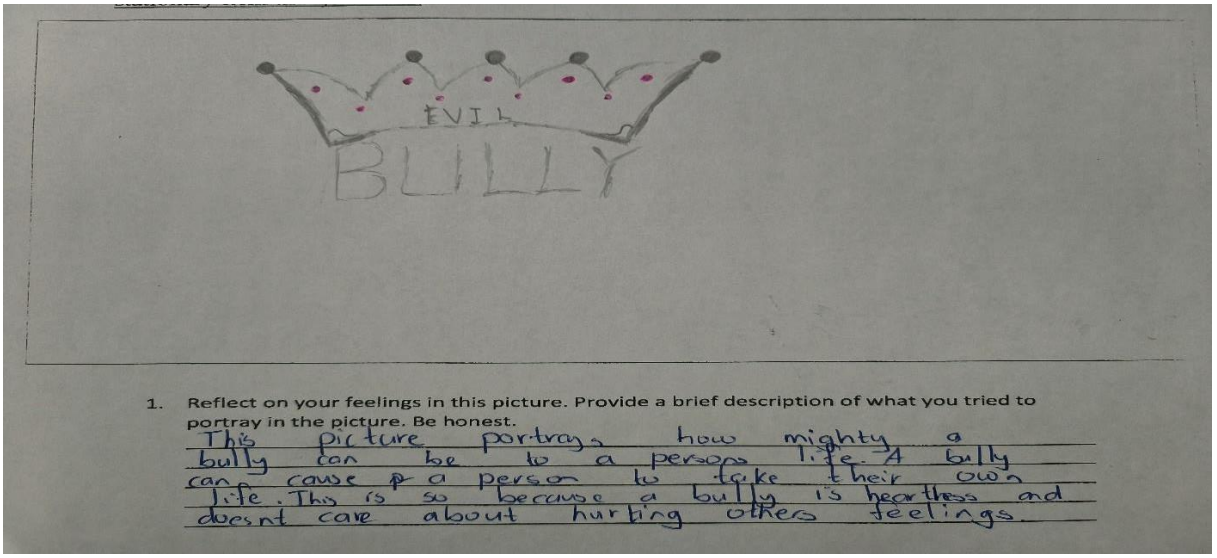


Figure 16: Visual Representation 3

In another visual task, Georgia depicted herself in class, receiving an instruction from her teacher to take notes down from the board. She expresses dissatisfaction with the perceived "*command*" and the teacher's power to control her, expressing a desire for it to stop. Georgia does not appreciate being given instructions. While her understanding of a teacher's power may have originated from a bad experience with a teacher, in this instance, she interprets her class situation as an issue of power. Her use of the words "*when will this stop?*" suggests a dislike for the routine of her daily school life. Her illustration does render an understanding ofthe education system being too rigid and routine for her to contribute to her education. The education system renders her as a voiceless learner which can be seen by her use of the thought bubble in the visual below. Freire (1970) critiqued this traditional process of banking education by stating that teachers become the subjects of knowledge and learners are rendered as meek objects, passive, and denied their freedom. This approach does not prepare nor allow the learners to make learning meaningful or relevant, because it relies on a system that encourages uniformity and rote learning, instead of diversity and critical thinking. Thus, the teacher becomes the authority which can reproduce the power dynamics of authority in society.

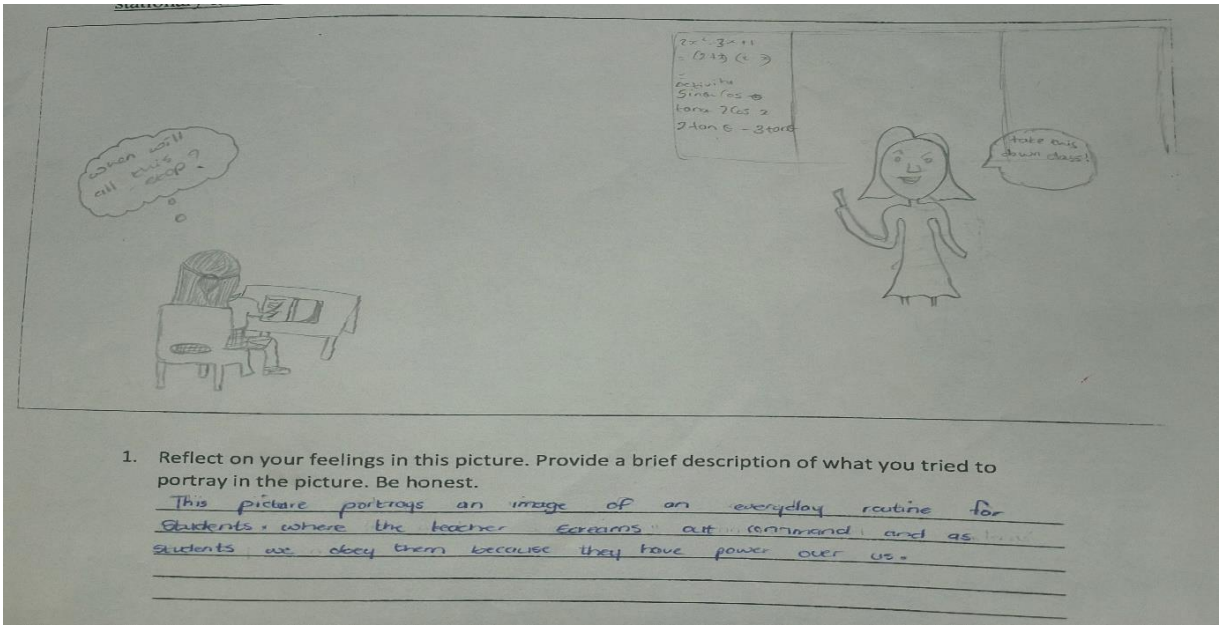


Figure 17: Visual Representation 4

6.3.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Learners' encounters and awareness of power in the dynamics of social relations

In the open-ended questionnaire, 22 learners shared a variety of examples of issues of power they see and experience in society. Learners like Amahle reflected on their physical and emotional abuse. She feels controlled by her abusers, with there being no escape for her and many others in a similar situation. Amahle is forced to execute tasks due to the fear of punishment. She feels compelled to do as she is told. She explains:

> *The power of people controlling me and forcing me to do things; fear make[s] me feel like there is no way to go from the scars from physical abuse and emotional damage.*

It is evident that Amahle is a victim of abuse by her words "*controlling me and forcing me to do things*". The critical pedagogy classroom seeks to break the silence of her trauma and fears to begin the process of addressing her abuse. She stated that "*fear make[s] me feel like there is no way to go*", which elucidates the reason for her silence throughout the abuse. Knowing that there are social structures and institutions to address what she is going through would reduce her fear. Amahle's reality of abuse would have never been discussed if the traditional reading of the play, *Macbeth*, was done in the classroom.

Jen narrows the idea of the power to control in the social dynamics surrounding the relationship between adults and children. She emphasises her experience that adults may resort to physical punishment if she disobeys them, articulating, "*people older than you have the power to beat you up if you do not listen to them*". Similarly, Theo expresses that he has "*power over younger members*" of his family, reinforcing Jen's idea of age being a factor of power to control.

Anele shares her experience of being controlled at home. She describes the immense fear associated with refusing to do things she does not want to do at home. She stated that "*I am controlled by people in my home … I am afraid*".

Ben draws on the concept of gender dynamics within households and presents a traditional perspective where the man is seen as the one in control at home, stating, "*as a man, they control the home*".

Based on the presented data, learners struggle with domestic abuse at the hands of the people they live with, individuals who are supposed to provide protection. Their responses are noteworthy as they point to households operating on the principles of instilling fear and resorting to violence, among other issues. If this is the norm in which learners are brought up, they may grow up and replicate such abuse in their households, believing that it is normal. This is where critical pedagogy becomes crucial in disrupting such norms and exposing social injustices so that learners avoid the pitfalls of power that are used negatively. Khamratana and Adunyarittigun (2021) calls for the critical pedagogy teacher to facilitate a critical interrogation of social relationships, even relationships that are as intimate as parent and child so that learners becomecritically conscious of oppressive practices that have become a tool for dehumanisation. Withinthis theme, the learners begin the process of addressing social injustices in their domestic settings by breaking the silence and identifying their oppressors.

Concerning the above responses, Scott (2018) claimed that power relations between the principal agent of power and the subaltern are determined by the extent to which the principal-agent controls the agency of the subaltern. Based on the data, the power capacity of parents against their children is violently oppressive and could be reproduced by learners as they develop as adults if not recognised as an issue of power. Learners recognise their experiences to be issues of power which they seek to escape.

Erin builds on the idea of power in "*making people fear you*". She believes that it enables the person whom one is afraid of to be in control. She provides examples such as "*discrimination, xenophobia, and bullying*" as issues of power she has seen in society. In

keeping with the idea of control, Shaun shared his experiences of "*people having more resources, which meant that they had more power over me because I had less*". He added that the "*fear of being punished is a powerful factor of control*" among people in the social arena.

It is evident that Shaun realises that the society he lives in is unequal, but he suggests that acting against injustices could lead to punishment by powerholders. He is conscious of power being associated with people who have more resources and the danger of challenging someone with more resources. His response relates to the play, as Macbeth sought to murder those who challenged his position of power. This could also allude to the trepidation of dealing with social injustices in society, as powerholders may not want to relinquish their resources for the sake of equality.

Shaun's response also calls into question his agency to deal with social injustice as fear becomes a prominent emotion. When teaching in a critical pedagogy classroom, Giroux (2010) and Freire (1970) argue that the central intention of laying down the roots for moral responsibility in wider democratic society outside their classrooms becomes essential. Shaun begins the process of making sense of the inequalities he experiences and witnesses, which leads him to make moral choices about finding his place in society.

Keshav used three words to portray his experiences of issues of power in society: "*stereotypes*", a form of power that others did not mention. He alludes to social norms having the power to "*control*" people in society. His third word was "*discrimination*". It is evident that Keshav draws on three sources of power that he is aware of in the societal sphere, which can be used to access power.

Bicchieri et al. (2021) expand on the idea of social norms and the control they could have over people by arguing that when behaviours are interdependent, the motivation to undertake such behaviour is conditional on a person's beliefs about what is commonly done and/or approved of in society, thus, any dominant belief that is not subscribed to by individuals in society is met with discrimination.

As evident from the data in the open-ended questionnaire above, the issues of power that learners see and experience in the domain of social relations are diverse. Therefore, it is important to explore whether learners recognise power in different aspects of their lives.

In the open-ended questionnaire, 43 learners responded by stating that they do have power in different aspects of their lives. This is a large number and could signify a higher sense of agency in their lives to deal with social injustices they witness or experience.

Eve stated that "*I do have the power to say no to something I am uncomfortable with and the power to express myself*". Eve draws on the power of her voice, possessing the ability to express herself whenever she feels uncomfortable. On the other hand, Jenny recognises the power to control herself but acknowledges a limitation in influencing the actions of others. While she asserts her ability to express her feelings in certain situations, her explanation appears somewhat disconnected from situations instigated by others. She acknowledges her inability to change situations provoked by others but emphasises her power over herself. She stated that,

> *I always do what is best for me … I have the power to control myself but not others. I do have the power to say no to something I am not comfortable with and to express how I feel due to certain situations I am faced with.*

The power to control is emphasised in her response. Unlike in the play "Macbeth," where the idea of control is portrayed in a negative sense, she uses it in a positive sense. Macbeth did not have control over himself (Chamberlain, 2005)**,** and thus, his lack of control over himself could be seen as an issue of power.

Dan shares a different perspective as he tries to emulate powerholders in society to help shape him to become powerful. He alludes that power implies controlling people's behaviour. He used words such as, "*I pay attention to them [powerholders] because they are influential*". He alludes to the notion that developing himself as an "*influencer*" means that he is in control. The irony in Dan's remark is that he had to be influenced to become an influencer. He recognised power and chose to take the same source of power for himself.

Jake has the power to resist the influence of others and make decisions by himself. He remains unchanged by people's opinions, unlike Dan. Jake used words like, "*I do not let people influence the decisions that I make. I do not let people's opinions about me change the way I do things and my morals*". Similarly, Aphiwe confidently remarks that people cannot control her; she stays true to herself, even though she is a child. Contrary to learners who experienced abuse at home and felt afraid to change their situation, Aphiwe has the power to resist the negative impacts imposed in her home situation. She is empowered and is in control of her life, suggesting that she is aware of her rights and dignity as a human. This is a lesson that could be used to empower other learners. She believes in herself regardless of her home situation. She comments, "*I always chose to stay true to myself and believe in myself regardless of my*

situation at home". It is evident from the data that she maintains high agency and autonomy in dealing with her difficult situations in her home, which does not influence her to become exploited and subsequently reproduce issues of power when she grows up.

Charles provides insight into his ability to change his home situation. He asserts that he has the power to do what is best for him, as evidenced by his statement, "*I have the power to change my life, my home situation. To control my emotions and to do what is best for me*".

It is clear that the learners have made a distinction between having control over their own actions and feelings as opposed to exerting control over others.

Ten learners believed that they do not have power in different aspects of their lives. Mandy feels that she does not have power over certain situations because she is afraid to face them. She stated that "*sometimes I don't feel like facing my problems or being bothered about them. it is hard to be concerned with everything. It's a lot*". She feels a sense of being overwhelmed when she thinks about facing issues in her life. She used the words "*I don't feel like facing my problems, being bothered, it is hard to be concerned*", which implies that she is powerless in her situation.

Max acknowledges that complete control over one's life is elusive, expressing, "*at times, I feel like I have everything under control, but I don't. As humans I think that we aren't supposed to have everything perfect, I guess*". His words, "*under control*" and *"perfect*", suggest a reflection of his powerlessness to change his circumstances in life. In contrast, Mike added that having power meant needing to control people. He does not have power in situations in his life because he feels incapable of controlling people. Despite moments in his life where he could potentially exert power over others, he resists. He stated, "*I do feel like people are giving me power, but I do not want to use it*", suggesting that he may perceive power as a negative attribute or burden too heavy to bear in society. His remark could also indicate that he views himself as powerless and incapable of controlling people. Mike stated that,

> *Having power is not my thing. I don't like controlling people or telling them what to do and what not to do. Sometimes I do feel like people are giving me power, but I do not want to use it.*

In the interviews, the learners were prompted to share instances of power they observe or encounter in their lives. Kim recounted a personal experience related to an issue of power in her home as follows:

About my experience … Sometimes I wish that the person who's causing negative things could change. I want to believe that he can change but he keeps on doing the same thing over and over. My stepfather is setting a bad example to my little brother because I don't want my little brother to grow up the way his father is. One day I will be able to protect him [little brother] most of the problems at home is financial because my stepdad buys things. One day I am going to have the power to protect my brother and mother.

It is evident from Kim's response that she experiences domestic violence at home due to issues of power between her stepfather and the rest of the family, which is negative in this instance. She hopes that one day she will help her younger brother not become like their abuser, as she is afraid that he might if she does not intervene one day. She wants to complete school and earn money to improve her financial situation at home and gain power, which is positive in this instance. The notion that wealth serves as a source of power to influence others is apparent in Kim's life, shaping her belief that acquiring wealth is necessary to bring about change in her household. This sentiment is reflected in her statement, "*when I complete school and maybe studies, I will work and have enough money and we won't need him*". She understands that he leverages his financial power over them in a negative way.

Charles also reflects on a domestic situation in which he was physically abused by an older family member who instructed him to do a chore even though it was not his chore to do. The issue of power relates to his abuser being older than him. He stated that "*the older person whose turn it was started being violent towards me and everyone else in the house did not say anything*". His response signifies the relationship between the powerful and the powerless in a domestic setup. This suggests that even when the powerholder is wrong, the powerless can never hold the powerholder accountable.

Ayanda explores the issue of GBV in society, asserting that women are more susceptible to being victims. He attributes the abuse of women to violations of cultural and social norms, arguing that men target women who fail to adhere to these norms. This perspective is encapsulated in the following statement:

Everything has two sides to it. You know some people live by certain cultural norms or rules, so this automatically means that if a woman violates the rule

> *she'll get sounded [hit] or shouted at by her husband. It is something that breaks these morals.*

Interestingly, Ayanda's perspectives primarily centred on women, indicating an awareness of the risks associated with societal and cultural norms. In the critical pedagogy classroom, it is important for learners to challenge norms that are designed to oppress people, particularly women in this case. Ayanda believes that a direct consequence of a woman's failure to uphold norms will result in physical abuse. It is evident in the dialogue with Ayanda that his views could replicate such values and beliefs about power relations among men and women in an intimate setting, which can be seen in his words, "*everything has two sides to it, who do not obey, violates,* and *the rule*".

It becomes increasingly important to sustain ongoing dialogues with Ayanda to ensure that his awareness of social injustice can be challenged rather than perpetuated as he grows up. Andiswa, in her interview, expressed that men are also subject to gender role expectations imposed by societal stereotypes. She delved into gender dynamics, elucidating that women often depend on men in the household as providers. There is an element of dependency from the women in Andiswa's example, reflecting societal prescriptions about manhood, much like in the play *Macbeth*. It is evident that learners have reinforced and replicated the patriarchal stereotype, which could be reproduced in society as they grow up if conversations around such issues do not happen in the classroom, allowing them to confront patriarchal ideas. She stated that,

> *A father must take care of the home, the mother tends to tell the father to man up and take care of the home when the father is not paying attention on what's happening around the house.*

Lungelo extends Andiswa's perspective by outlining that the man is a powerholder in the home, and nobody can question his father at home. "*My dad is one example of power in our home. What he says goes, and we don't question him*". Lungelo provides a classic example of a patriarchal household. He appears confident and proud of his father, who makes the decisions at home.

When learners were asked to create a visual representation of power that they see and experience in their lives, two learners shared drawings that reflect issues of power in the social domain.

Alisha's drawing depicts her struggle to cope with abuse from her family. Her friends seem to be supportive. She expresses deep depression, and suicide seems to be her only escape.

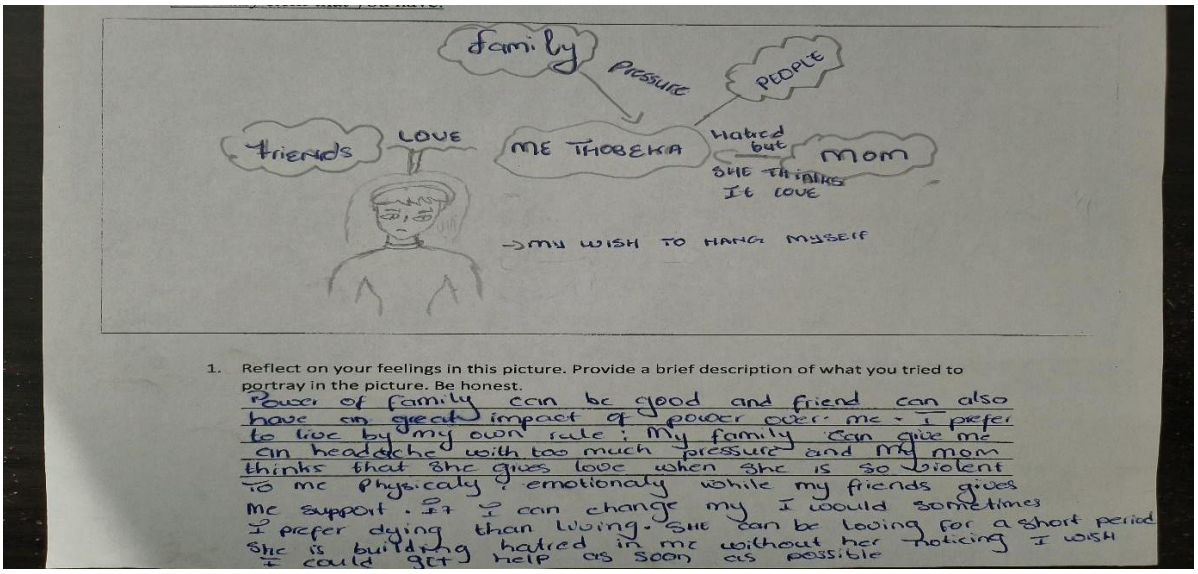


Figure 18: Visual Representation 5

Alisha's lack of agency to deal with issues of power in her life is evident in the illustration above. The words used in the speech bubbles, such as "*family*", and, in particular, her "*mom*", are significant as they portray key identifications of the agents of her oppression, which is crucial in understanding power relations in the family structure. The rope around her neck illustrates the extent to which she feels powerless in a family set-up that is stacked against her, and even the "*love*" that she receives from her "*friends*" is deemed insufficient. The critical pedagogy classroom must become a portal through which the "*help*" that she needs is attained, not just from external sources but from within herself. Therefore, by discussing issues of abuse that learners in similar situations experience in the critical pedagogy classroom, the process of understanding that she never has to go through such abuse, and that help is available, can be achieved.

Similarly, Alexa's illustration depicts her struggle with issues of abuse, but she finds it challenging to speak up against her abusers. She acknowledges her situation and yearns for freedom from it. Physical and emotional abuse represent power dynamics experienced by

Alexa. Fear prevents her from taking action to change her situation. Alexa emphasises the "*power of speaking out*", indicating that abuser's often use physical and emotional abuse to silence their victims. Recognising the power in speaking out against abuse, the critical pedagogy classroom can serve as a platform for abuse victims to raise awareness of their struggles, empowering them to confront their fear and transform their situations.

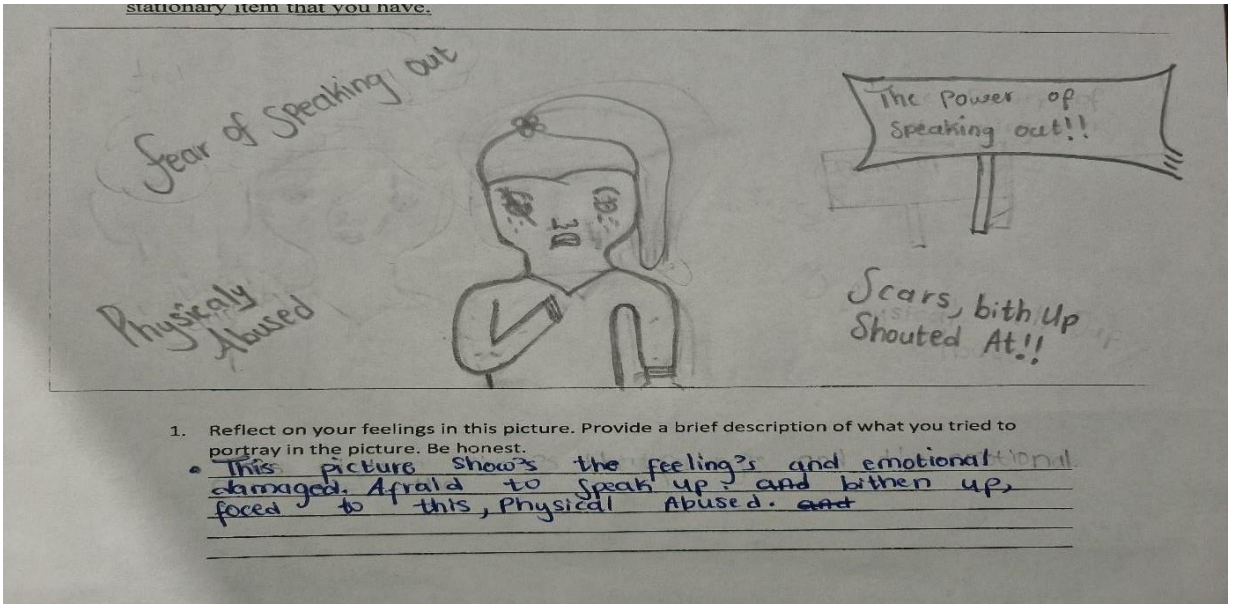


Figure 19: Visual Representation 6

6.3.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Learners' exploring power in the psychological domain: The power of the self

In a continuation of the open-ended questionnaire, eight learners expressed their views on the power that they have within themselves when they were asked to identify examples of power. Jenna did not victimise her gender identity; instead, she feels powerful as a woman and can make decisions for herself. She has the power to protect loved ones and make good decisions. She used words such as, "*I have the ability to make decisions as a woman* and *be responsible, choosing to use my power in a good way to protect loved ones*".

Senzo uses adjectives similar to those used to describe Macbeth before he turned evil. He maintains that he has the power of good values and to help others. He declares, "*I am brave, courageous, strong, and worthy. I choose to see the good values in me. And to use power to help others*". A sense of community and agency to help others is a striking quality in Senzo.

Lenny avers that he possesses the resilience to "*overcome anything*" in his life. Likewise, Justin experiences power within himself. He has the ambition and strength to achieve his dreams. He is also resilient through his frustrations. Justin affirms, "*I have the strength to chase my ambition. The power of force when I am frustrated*".

It is clear that learners like Jenna refuse to conform to the status quo of gender identity, and in the critical pedagogy classroom, she directs her educational experience to become an activist against oppressive structures that stifle the independence of women. She asserts, "*I have the ability to make decisions as a woman*". Discussions surrounding the agency of women in society must be addressed in the critical pedagogy classroom to empower learners and debunk stereotypes. Her understanding of power is perceived as autonomy, acting as an agent to foster a sense of community and to "*protect loved ones*".

Senzo portrays characteristics of power such as "*brave*", "*courageous*", "*strong*", and "*worthy*", which are crucial in developing resistance and the ability to fight against social injustices so that learners who experience abuse can be empowered. Lenny and Justin express an innate sense of power that manifests as resilience and courage against negative forces. They have the self-belief to "*overcome anything*", and recognising "*the power of force when I am frustrated*" is significant in understanding that the ability to address social injustices starts from within, serving as an empowerment for others.

The data reveal significant findings within the critical pedagogy classroom, where learners with diverse experiences of seemingly inescapable abuse converge. The discussions centre on the power inherent in the self, serving as a starting point for these learners to overcome their challenging situations. The significance does not only have implications for empowering learners but also empowers the teacher, as noted by Freire (1970), who emphasised that through such dialogues with learners, the teacher is not just teaching but is also learning while in dialogue with the learners.

Thando relayed her experience of being bullied at school as follows:

> *At primary school I went through the whole thing, I use to be bullied. I used to be bullied because my nose was quite bigger. And yeah, it was because of physical things. I realise that bullies are just weak and try to suppress some weaknesses in them. In my life, for me, I have the power to think positively about myself. I would like to speak to people and influence them to continue and never lose hope. Give them positive self-esteem.*

It is evident that Thando is not defeated by her experience and has developed a strong sense of determination to overcome her bullying experience. Moreover, she expresses a willingness to empower others who might be facing similar challenges. Thando's response contradicts the notion put forth by Steyn and Singh (2018) and Horton (2019), who argue that victims often turn to bullying as a means to attain higher status, safety, and prestige within their community. Thando expressed her belief that her power lies in thinking positively about herself, which could mean that external factors, like bullying, no longer pose an issue of power in her life.

Like Thando, Sam reflects on a bullying incident in her life. She was bullied for being overweight in her early schooling years. She overcame the trauma by speaking positively about herself and not giving power to the bullies, which she relayed as follows:

> *When I was younger, I was a bit overweight, and children overpowered, and they turned on me for being overweight and they never actually respected my decisions or anything I did. They always treated me differently. I tried to stand in front of the mirror and say that I am worth it and that I belong in society and tried not to listen to people so that it never affected me. When a person tends to think of what other people say, then bullies have the power.*

Sam seems to acknowledge the potential power of speaking positively about herself to counter the negative influence from her peers. However, there were times when she did not follow this practice, allowing her tormentors to wield power over her emotions and self-perception. This is evident in her statement that "*children overpowered*" her and made her feel marginalised in society. Thus, Sam draws on the power imbalance between bullies and the victim, which often leads to psychological harm (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Sam recognised that victories are achieved in the mind and successfully countered the adverse effects of being a victim by challenging her self-perceptions, resisting societal constructs imposed on her. As she expressed, "*I tried to stand in front of the mirror and say that I am worth it and that I belong in society and tried not to listen to people*".

In a separate interview, Brian appears to exert self-control. His aspiration to live for himself provides a glimpse into the extent of influence he has over his own life. Unlike the other interviewees who expressed a desire to assist others, Brian emphasises living life for his

own sake. He articulates, "*what I do doesn't affect who and who, if affects me at the end of the day*".

Abigail shared her views on the power that people have over her and the power that she has within herself. Her illustration contrasts her understanding of power with what she has control over, and the nature of power people have over her.

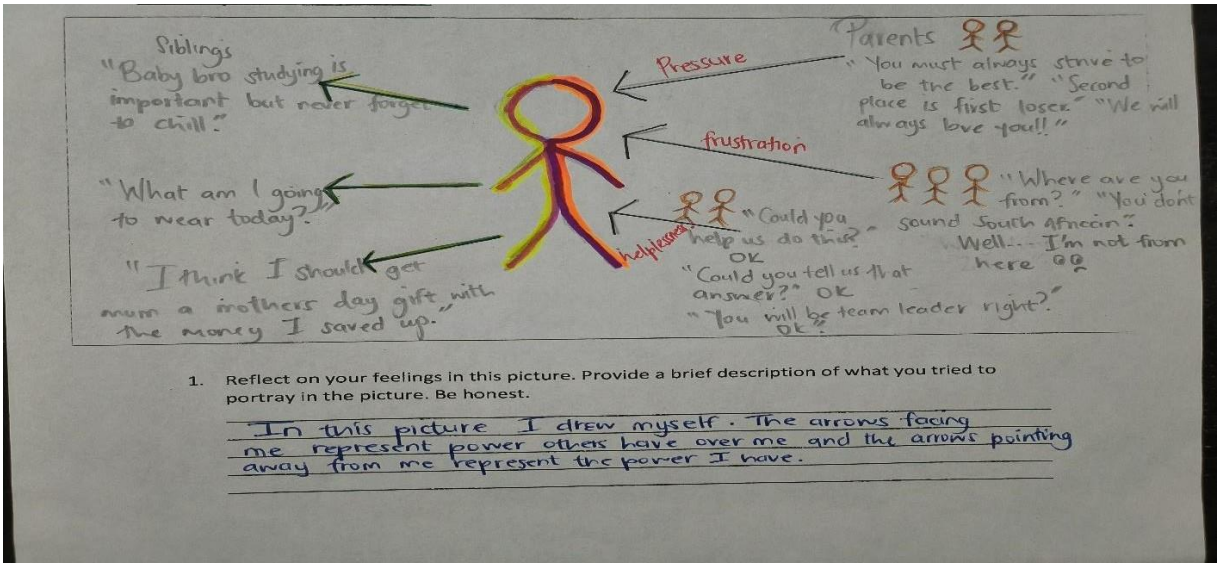


Figure 20: Visual Representation 7

Abigail drew a picture of herself as being central to various issues that surround her. The arrows that represent "*pressure*" are from her "*parents*"; "*frustration*" is from people in society who see her as being different since she is not South African; and "*helplessness*" is from her peers who exploit her for her intelligence. Abigail showcases her sense of helplessness in coping with external influences that evoke negative emotions within her. However, she contrasts this with the positive influence she exerts over people, such as her brother, whom she guides by emphasising that "*studying is important, but never forget to chill*". She does not allow for the negative forces of power to impact her power to show care and love to her family, even though her parents pressurise her to excel in school. This is evident in her contemplation within the illustration, "*I think I should get mom a Mother's Day gift with the money I saved up*". Thus, external issues of power that cause *pressure, frustration,* and *helplessness* do not negatively impact her personal interactions with her family.

The data is noteworthy in addressing the research question as it reveals that Sam utilises her free will to achieve positive outcomes instead of internalising her challenges, potentially

avoiding the perpetuation of negative emotions onto others. This contrasts with the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who respond to their pressures, frustrations, and helplessness with malevolent actions.

The following section wraps up the chapter with a brief conclusion.

6.4 Conclusion

By focussing on the open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and visual tasks, this chapter delved into crucial insights on how learners perceive and comprehend power dynamics in Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*. It also explored the connections learners draw between power dynamics in the play and those in their own lives. The presented findings underscore the importance of applying theoretical principles of critical pedagogy and CLP in the English Home Language classroom.

Attention now shifts to a discussion of the findings of the study that attempts to respond to RQ 3.

CHAPTER 7

DATA PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

7.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I elucidated and deliberated upon the outcomes of the study's two research questions, understanding how learners in two Grade 11 English Home Language classes perceive and comprehend power dynamics in Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*. Additionally, I explored how the learners establish connections between power dynamics in the play and those prevalent in their own lives. The findings presented in this chapter are discussed under Theme 3, sub-themes 3.1: *Learners' conceptions of leadership, and* sub-theme 3.2: *Their places within that conception* and *learners' conceptions of power*, as summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Theme 3 - Learners' beliefs about power

Theme	Sub-theme
Theme 3: Learners' beliefs about power	Sub-theme 3.1: Learners' conceptions of leadership and their places within that conception
	Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' conceptions of power

7.2 Theme 3: Learners' Beliefs About Power

This section presents Theme 3 and its related sub-themes. Table 5 below recaps the RQ and Objectives addressed by this theme.

Table 5: Recap of RQ 3 and Objective 3

Research Question 3	Objective 3
How do events and characters in the play, *Macbeth,* help construct Grade 11 learners' beliefs about power?	To explore how events and characters in the play, *Macbeth,* help to construct learners' beliefs about power.

7.2.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Learners' conceptions of leadership and their places within that conception

To set up a discussion of learners' conceptions of leadership and their places within that conception, it is important to reiterate Freire's (1970) claim that education must be centred upon developing humanised learners who are critically conscious so that they can act to liberate themselves, and the world, from injustice. By learners critically engaging with issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*, as a catalyst for critical reflection and political agency (Freire, 1970), this sub-section divulges the extent to which learners understand their responsibility in dealing with issues of social justice.

In the open-ended questionnaire, learners were asked to identify the qualities that make a leader. Thirty-six learners responded with ideas of leadership that represent a strong sense of selflessness toward transforming the conditions of people and civic responsibility. Max and Lungelo conceptualise "a leader" as a person embodying virtuous characteristics such as *loyalty*, *honesty*, *ambition*, and *mercy*. Lungelo's choice of words varies, suggesting that his perception of a leader is versatile, capable of leading with *honesty* while maintaining a sense of *ambition*. In the play, *ambition* is seen as a destructive quality through the portrayal of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, but Max used words such as "*loyalty*" and "*mercy*" in association with ambition, indicating that he possibly views these qualities as positive. The presented data in this theme holds significance, reflecting Max's interpretation in contrast to the play's depiction of destructive ambition and fostering critical thinking to resist dominant narratives. He asserts, a "*leader is always aiming to better the circumstances of people* and *don't abuse innocent people*". His remark is important in the critical pedagogy classroom as it draws on the idea of social justice.

Lungelo's statement overlaps with the notion of improving the circumstances of others as stated by Max. Lungelo added that a leader must "*acknowledge what the rest of the people need and earn respect*". His perspective on leadership qualities is not focused on the leader's self-interest but rather on their ability to be accountable for the needs of the people they lead. Implicit in his statement is the notion of a desire to create a just and equal society for all, which contrasts with the portrayal of leadership by Macbeth. It is evident that the significance of learners engaging with leadership qualities during their study of the play *Macbeth* contributes to understanding what social justice means from a leader's perspective and how that may be represented in society as learners become more active citizens.

Similarly, other learners, like Olwethu, asserted that "*people must be able to relate to their leader*". This assertion could imply that the interests of leaders must align with the interests of the people they lead. Ken provides insight what this could mean by remarking that "*leaders are committed to achieving a common goal*". Considering the research question, the data raises learners' awareness of the role of leaders in society who are concerned about social justice and the common good, as reflected in the phrase "*committed to achieving a common goal*", a perspective not evident in Macbeth's case. The assertion by Harrison and Boyd (2003) that democracy is linked to positive and wholesome attributes finds support in Olwethu's statement that leaders are focused on "*achieving* a *common goal*". Headds that leaders "*nurture people's strengths and talents*". The conception of leadership held by Olwethu suggests that people in positions of power have the responsibility to liberate and empower other people.

Smangele emphasises the civic-mindedness and ethical attributes of a leader, employing terms like "*being ethical*" *and* "*civic-minded*". This aligns with the conceptualisations of leadership by other learners, highlighting a focus on serving the interests of the people in society rather than an individual's ambition for power, as explored in the play, *Macbeth*.

Abigail employs robust language to delve into leadership qualities, emphasising the word "*fighting*" repeatedly. In her view, leaders serve as custodians of goodness and should actively champion the pursuit of truth and honesty. She asserts that being a leader means "*fighting for what is right for the benefit of the people. Fighting for the truth and being honest is what makes a leader powerful*". The responses from Smangele and Abigail indicate that they construct their beliefs about leadership around democratic ideals. Considering South Africa's history and its journey toward democracy, the use of the word "*fighting*" by Abigail appears to be appropriate, suggesting a connection to the liberation struggle. Within this theme, Malcolm and Macduff eventually must fight against the tyranny of Macbeth, which is significant in understanding Abigail's remark, fighting "*for what is right for the benefit of the people*". It is possible to conclude that physical violence is a source of power against oppression; however, Abigail's use of the words "*truth*" and "*honest*" could suggest resilience as a means of *fighting* against oppression.

In simpler terms, Harry expressed that a leader's role involves motivating others to improve. He emphasised that a leader "*encourages others to be better and cares about others' opinions*". The data clearly indicates that leaders should not be disliked or feared. On the

contrary, if leaders prioritise the improvement of people's lives, they will earn respect and support, potentially fostering a sense of democracy in society.

Harry's use of words like "*encourages others to be better*" suggests that leaders, in his view, should not perceive themselves as being at the top of the hierarchy, a position that could protect their power and potentially lead to its misuse to exploit others. Instead, Harry's perception of a leader is one who "*cares about others' opinions*", which a noteworthy observation when examining leadership qualities in the play. This perspective stands in opposition to the concept of dictatorship and aligns with a democratic approach where the voices of the people are valued and heard. By Harry engaging with leadership qualities in the critical pedagogy classroom, he explores features of a just society with a raised consciousness. Alscher et al. (2022) claim that democracies and their institutions can only function well if embedded in a culture of democracy that depends on the participation and underlying political sophistication of a country's citizenry.

Six learners chose to offer descriptive words to articulate their conceptualisations of leadership. Vusi used words such as "*wise*", "*noble*", and "*warrior*". Similarly, Siphokazi used the words "*respect*", "*pride*", and "*honour*". Interestingly, the words used by these learners share a similar connection to the play (*Macbeth*). Macbeth's character was initially described as noble, valiant, and brave before he embarked on his quest for kingship through acts of murder (Mohammad, 2019). Learners could have constructed their conceptions of leadership based on Macbeth's portrayal at the start of the play.

There is an underlying unity in the words "*noble*", "*honour*", and "*respect*", which contributes to an understanding that learners believe leadership to be against the violent representation of Macbeth who abused his power. By learners engaging with such notions of leadership, they become increasingly aware of social injustices at the hands of people in power as they grow to become more active in the political and social domains of their lives. Also, Khetho conceives leadership as being "*strong*", having "*courage*", and demonstrating "*bravery*" in the face of danger. Furthermore, she added, "*a true leader is an example to the people you lead*". Harrison concurred that a leader must be *brave*. Martin opted for the words *"brave*", "*valiant*", "*noble*", and "*worthy*". The consistent use of the word "*brave*" could suggest that learners perceive leadership as a challenging position, requiring individuals in such roles to possess the courage to face difficulties.

Calvin emphasises the quality of persistence in overcoming challenges, asserting that a leader must "*face challenges, not neglect problems*". His response aligns with McLaren's

(2016) view of challenging hegemony that conditions subordinate groups to react to ideas and opinions in prescribed ways. Calvin's remark contributes to understanding his agency to address issues regarding social practices and structures that only a leader with a raised consciousness of power relations can enact. Thus, the critical pedagogy classroom transforms learners to challenge situations that could seem inviolable and natural to learners who may go through their educational journeys absent of critical thinking.

In contrast to the findings above, 12 learners conceptualised leadership in the open-ended questionnaire as a force of dictatorship over people. Charles believes that leadership is effective when "*people fear you*". He added that a leader must be "*ruthless*", and "*you may have to kill to gain respect and power*", a contrasting viewpoint from the other learners. Lungile concurs with Charles as she states that "*fear*" is a quality of leadership that is powerful. The learners' perception of fear as a tool for dictatorship aligns with Freire's (1970) conceptualisation of dehumanisation, highlighting the distortion of the ideal of a just and equal society inherent in critical pedagogy. Learners may conform to the representation of unequal power relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. It is essential for them to realise that achieving an equal society requires the oppressor to become conscious of their oppression, allowing the oppressed to truly experience freedom.

Leadership tends to become darker and oppressive by learners like Alisha who stated that "*a leader will need to kill to become more powerful*". It is evident that Alisha also conforms to the representation of power in the play. She remarked that a leader becomes "*more powerful*" when they *kill* which could allude to Macbeth's rise to power as he used murder as a tool to become King. Jen could contribute insight to Alisha's remark by suggesting that a leader might resort to any means necessary to maintain their position of power. She used words such as "*use your rules to do everything you want to and keep your power*".

Alisha and Jen share similar views on leadership; however, Jen suggests that leadership is a contested position by others who may want the title of leadership, whereas Alisha alludes to the notion that a leader needs to exercise social control through murder to increase and establish authority. Their conception of leadership power aligns with the tyrannical leadership of Macbeth over Scotland.

Samkelo directly stated that the quality of control determines a leader's power and that having people as servants is a strong quality that showcases the extent of one's leadership power. She used words such as "*the more control you have over people, the more power you have*". Franky brazenly stated that a leader needs to be "*ruthless*", "*aggressive*", and have

"*control*". He also believes that having "*mental stability*" is a characteristic of a leader. Amy extends the above claims by asserting that a leader must "*implement punishment*" and "*have no mercy*".

In the interviews, four learners shared mixed views that explored leadership as the maintenance of a balance between dictatorship and positive attributes for the common good of others. Ayanda, just like Amy, spoke about the leader being able to "*enforce rules and implement punishment without fear and favour*". Brian concurs by saying that "*a leader must be tough and always strict*". He used phrases such as "*leaders must always be bossy for people to take them seriously. Exactly like Macbeth*". Both learners use different words to describe their views of leaders, but their belief that leadership means being an oppressive force over anyone in opposition to one's rule is maintained.

In another interview, Andiswa relates her beliefs about leadership to the play by stating that,

> *You have to be intellectual, brave, [and] courageous. Because if you are soft and fair-hearted, soft-hearted then people are going to manipulate you they can break you down in all types of forms. It is evident in the play too. Macbeth was kind then the witches approached him and his wife. And also Duncan was kind; he was killed.*

Andiswa believes that Duncan is a representation of leadership that is weak. People can manipulate you and break you down in many ways. She relates this to the play by also drawing on Macbeth who was a warrior hero at the start of the play, but he was also manipulated. Her insight concludes that one must be intelligent, brave, and courageous to be a leader. Andiswa may draw on lessons from her reading *against* the play's literary elements (Borksheim-Black et al.,2014) by confronting ideas of manipulation as a tool of power over subordinate groups who are not conscious of the capacity of evil by others.

Max views money as a source of leadership and power. Money enables one to have resources and if one has resources, they have control over people. He added that people with money will want to keep their power just like in the play. Macbeth murders anyone who threatens his power. Max emphasises the connection between power and wealth, a significant finding in this theme. It suggests that learners believe money provides increased access to resources, perpetuating inequality. In their view, the powerful safeguard their wealth and may

even resort to murder to maintain their privileged access to resources. Max's reading *against* the play's embedded contextual ideologies to locate counter-stories and hidden messages about its representations relates to the reader response principle of CLP (Borksheim-Black et al., 2014). Max commented:

> *Money, one needs to have money. And Macbeth knew that with the position of King he has all the resources. He wanted to stay in power, and he saw enemies in everyone, so he had to kill his friend like Banquo, Duncan, and Macduff's family.*

The diagram below illustrates the varying conceptions of leadership held by learners. It also highlights learners' perspectives on issues of power in leadership from a social justice standpoint, presenting both positive and negative characteristics associated with a leader.

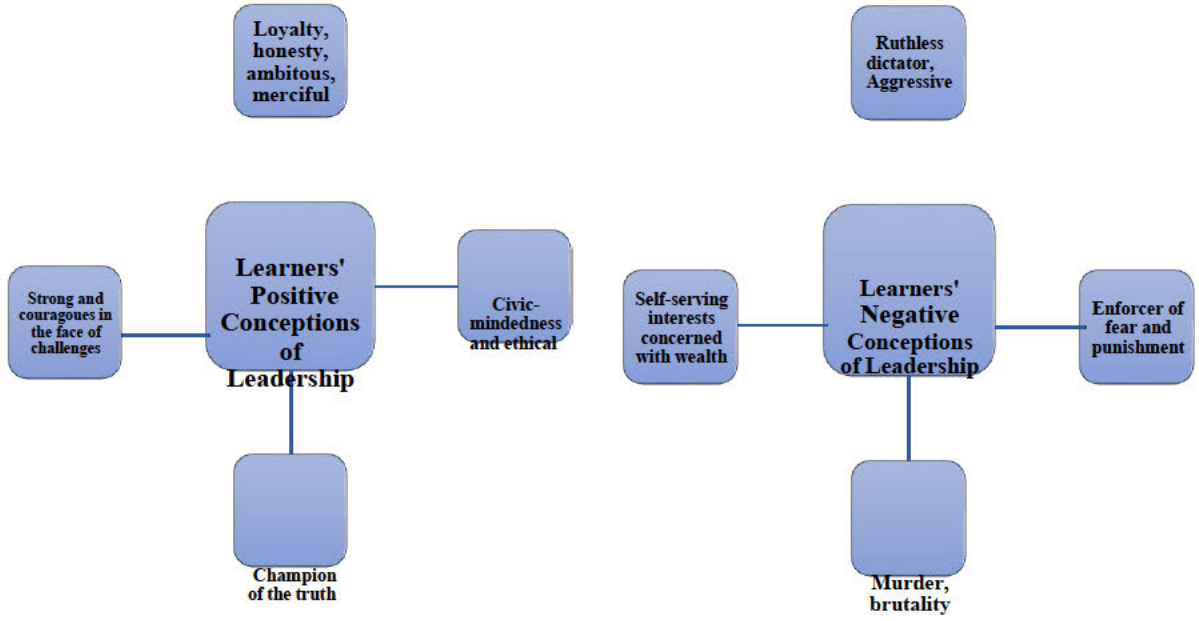


Figure 21: Learners' contrasting conceptions of leadership

To comprehend the learners' positions within their concepts of leadership, they were asked whether they perceive themselves as leaders.

In the open-ended questionnaire, 32 learners responded by stating that they do view themselves as leaders. Chris and Amahle stated that they are leaders. Chris and Amahle affirmed that they see themselves as leaders. Chris expressed her confidence and emphasised the importance of respect for others. She pointed out that murdering loyal individuals is morally wrong, and she does not consider deception a quality of good leadership. She used words such as "*I would not kill or betray anyone I am loyal … I do not pretend … I am true to who I am*". Amahle idea of leadership resonates with Freire's (1970) call for humanisation because she will neverabuse her position of power to oppress others. She considers other people's feelings by statingthat "*I can also consider other people's troubles … I respect people*".

Furthermore, Henry reflects on his ability to influence people but, at the same time, considers other people's opinions, prioritising the well-being of people over himself. He stated that "*I am able to influence others, but I also put others before me*". He constructs a dual perspective of leadership of maintaining influence and caring for others. Sam, on the other hand, discovers that she is "*self-aware*" and possesses the quality to "*influence*" people. Pablo considers himself a "*natural leader*" who enjoys "*helping people to develop their skills*". Jacky acknowledges her "*self-control*" and asserts that having her "*life under control*" is what, in her belief, qualifies her as a leader.

Frank extends the narrative of leadership that positively serves people by stating he "*shows appreciation for those who put effort in his life*" and maintains that he shows "*respect for everyone*". The data is significant for addressing the research question as learners present perspectives of leadership that contradict the dominant representation of power in leadership depicted in the play. Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) highlighted the recognition that a text lacks an objective, inherent meaning, emphasising that meaning is negotiated through a reader's interaction with the text. This perspective aligns with a reader-response approach to studying the play.

Similar to the earlier question that revealed learners expressing negative perspectives on leadership, participants in this section indicated that they do not see themselves as leaders

because they lack tyrannical qualities associated with acquiring power.

In the open-ended questionnaire, 22 learners felt that they were not leaders. John does not believe that he is a leader because he is "*shy*" and "*cannot control people*". His idea that leadership involves controlling people is a prevailing conception among other learners. Max dislikes the idea of being a leader due to its perceived dangers, referencing the play's narrative to support his stance. He highlights the instance of Duncan, who held a position of power as king but fell victim to violence orchestrated by Macbeth in pursuit of power. Max remarked: *Anything can happen at any time to you because a lot of other people want tobecome a leader, like in the play Duncan got killed for Macbeth to become king.*

Kim acknowledges the challenge of maintaining constant awareness of her actions and expresses concern about the unintentional consequences of such. In her view, assuming a leadership role inevitably leads to trouble, whether it be competition from others aspiring for the same position or the difficulty of satisfying everyone. She stated that "*sometimes the things that you do, it can be done without even noticing. And that can lead you to trouble*". Her comprehension of power in leadership holds significance as it reflects an awareness that satisfying the diverse needs of everyone is challenging, making the pursuit of social justice a complex endeavour due to varying individual needs. The apprehension she experiences regarding the unknown could be likened to the fears depicted in the play, as Macbeth also grappled with uncertainties, leading him to seek guidance from witches.

Dan revealed that he "*cannot control people*", thus reinforcing the idea of leadership being associated with the idea of control. Joe expresses his disregard for any civic participation as he is more concerned with his progress by stating that "*I cannot control people; I am concerned about myself*". Similarly, Ben believes that he lacks the ability to control others, associating control with people heeding his directives. However, he acknowledges having control over his own decisions, expressing, "*no one obeys what I say, but I can make my own* decisions". Implied from the data is that learners recognise their power over themselves, highlighting a crucial finding in the critical pedagogy classroom as learners demonstrate resistance to external forces of control. However, their comprehension of leadership is rooted in the concept of control, a prevailing theme in the play, and is likewise ingrained in the fundamental structure of our society, as per their reader-response approach (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014).

In the interviews, Erin discussed her sentiments about not viewing herself as a leader

while reflecting on her friendships and her prioritisation of others. She contemplates her character in connection to Banquo, who was aware of Macbeth's influence by the witches but chose not to disclose it to anyone. That, according to Erin, is not considered a leadership quality. The emerging quality that does not deem her a leader through the play, *Macbeth*, is loyalty toward people close to her, even though they may be wrong. She comments:

> *No sir, I don't consider myself to be a leader. I mean, like, I don't know … I like putting people first. You know, I just put people first and I could say it gives them rights, in a way, like Macbeth's friend Banquo. He knew about all the prophecies, and he didn't tell anyone. But because Macbeth knew that he knew, he tried to kill him. And I can say that I am that type of person, Banquo, who trusts their friends, don't want to let them down.*

Within a reader-response approach, Erin draws on the context of their lived experiences of power in relation to the play to raise her consciousness of the negative impact that her loyalty brings to her, which can be seen in her words "*I could say it gives them rights*".

In another interview, Asanda strongly rejects the idea of being a leader, citing his status as a learner without financial means. He associates leadership with wealth, emphasising the manifestation of power through financial resources. He stated that "*no, no, no, no it will take time. I am still in school I do not have money yet*". Once again, the learners underscore the intimate relationship between wealth and power, signifying the significance of understanding wealth as a source of power in society.

Christine recognises her power to assist others, noting that fellow learners approach her for help when they are unable to communicate with teachers or peers. She emphasises her ability to speak up and be a supportive figure. In her interview, she stated that,

> *Yeah, in school most of the time, learners usually come to me when they want help, but they are unable to take the leap sometimes and speak for the people who are afraid to ask for help from teachers or other learners. I am able to speak up like that. And at home, I am the oldest now, so I take charge.*

Christine's assertiveness towards teachers is perceived as a form of power among her peers. It is evident that she challenges traditional power relations between teachers and learners, potentially empowering other learners to disrupt the traditional authority of teachers.Learners

should never feel afraid to ask for help from custodians responsible for facilitating abetter future. However, her traditional view of age being a factor of power in a domestic situation is upheld when she states that "*at home, I am the oldest now, so I take charge*".

In the visual task, Khetho depicted her personality and expressed that she does not view herself as a leader due to her aversion to conflict. This parallels Malcolm's character in the play. Khetho's identification with Malcolm's representation reflects the principles of reader-response and problem-posing education, demonstrating her reflective and critical examination of her own leadership qualities.

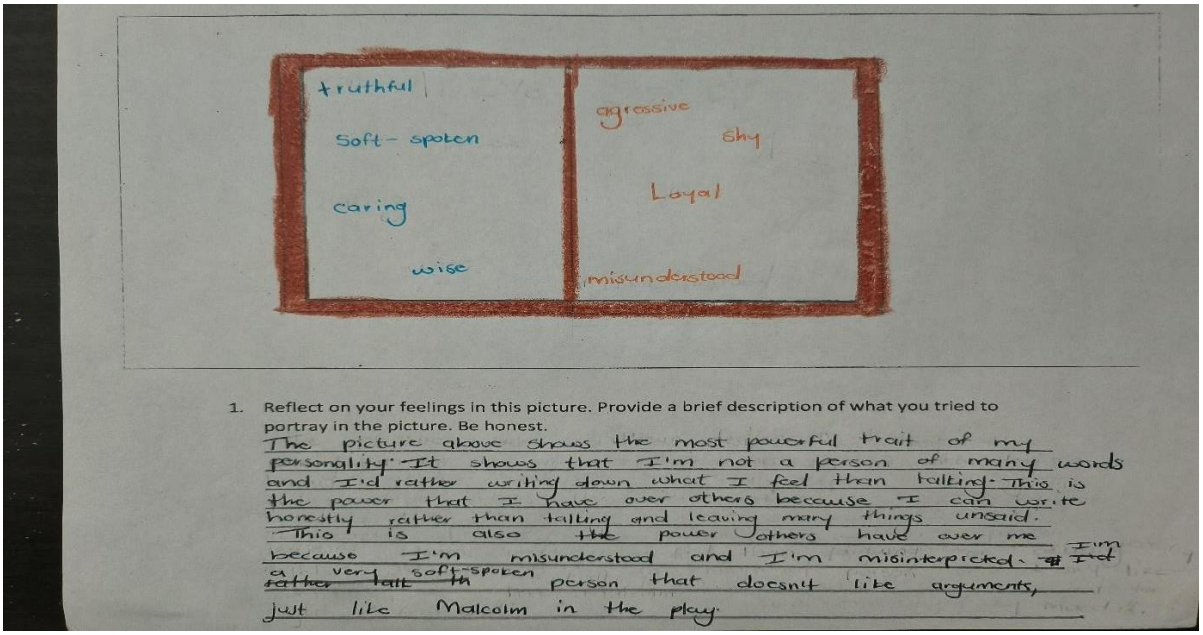
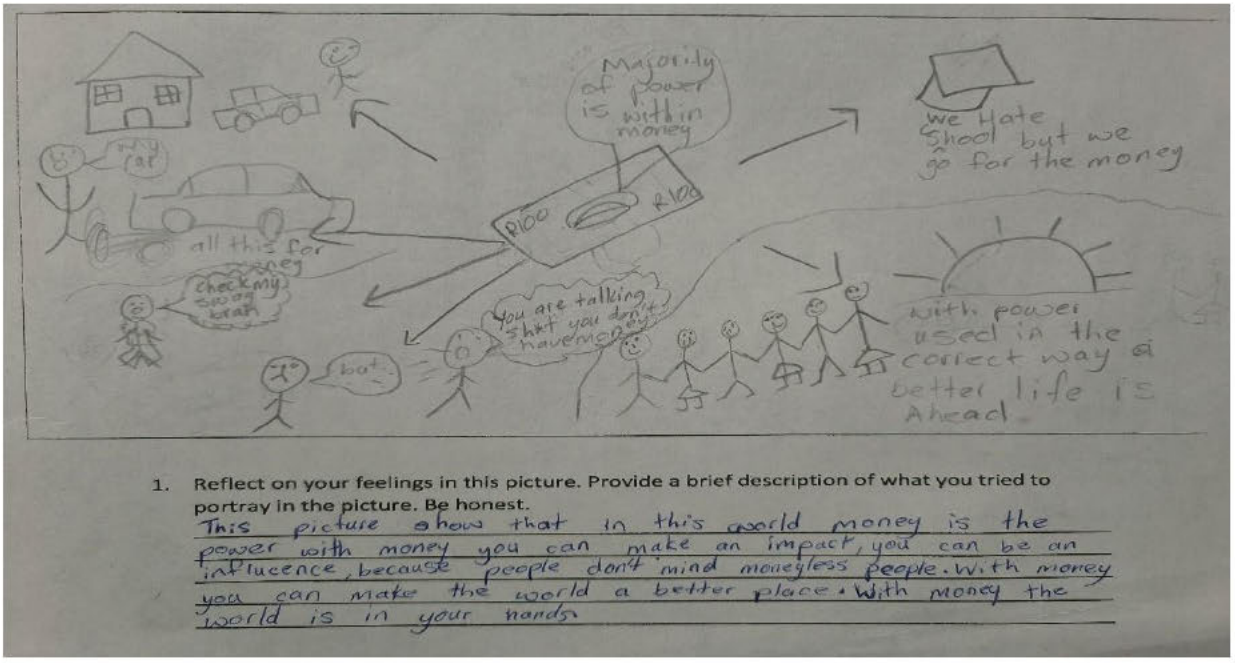


Figure 22: Visual Representation 8

In another visual task, it's clear that Asanda places a high value on money. He believes that money is essential, equating it to the key to having the best life. The link between wealth and power emerges as a prominent finding in this study, underscoring the learners' conviction that wealth is a fundamental factor for leading a fulfilled life.



1. Reflect on your feelings in this picture. Provide a brief description of what you tried to portray in the picture. Be honest.

This picture show that in this world money is the power with money you can make an impact, you can be an influcence, because people don't mind moneyless people. With money you can make the world a better place. With money the world is in your hands.

Figure 23: Visual Representation 9

The pie chart below illustrates the total number of learners who identified with either positive or negative conceptions of leadership, as previously illustrated. It is evident that the learners who did not believe that they were leaders subscribed to negative characteristics of power to justify their responses, whereas learners who believed that they were leaders, subscribed to positive characteristics of leadership.

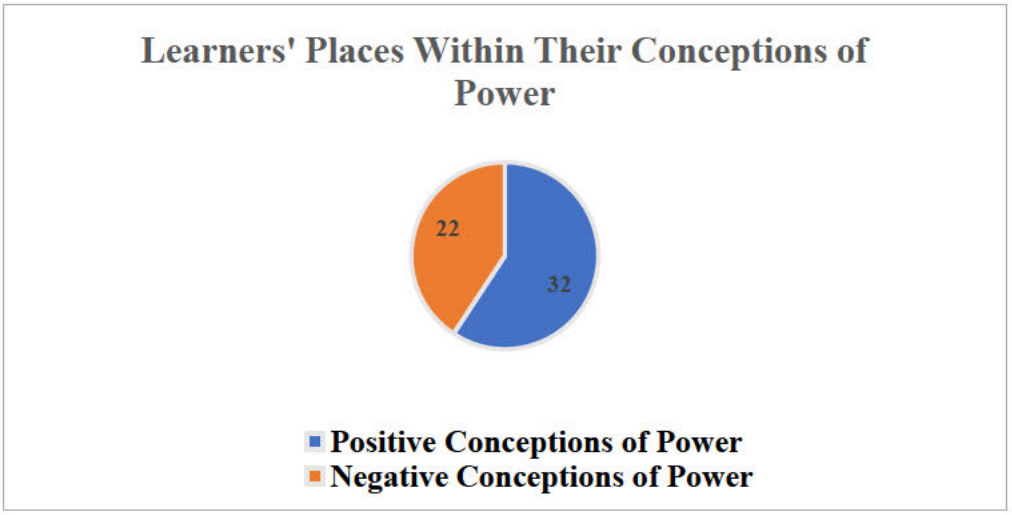


Figure 24: Learners' places within their conceptions of power

In this sub-section, it becomes apparent that the learners' conceptualisation of leadership contradicts their personal beliefs about leadership as revealed in the preceding sub-section. What could this imply about their perceptions of their lived experiences of leadership in society and their personal beliefs about leadership? Do some learners feel displaced within societal wickedness and issues of power they experience and see in their lives, or could their differing responses signal a raised consciousness and agency of what needs to change? Inferred from the data is the perspective of 22 learners, suggesting that leadership necessitates the possession of negative characteristics. However, the learners' responses illuminate their interpretations of leadership concerning power dynamics in the context of the play, *Macbeth*.

7.2.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' conceptions of power

This subsection represents the culmination of learners' perspectives on the phenomenon of power, developed through their exploration of power dynamics in the play, *Macbeth.* This exploration has, in turn, prompted critical reflections on power issues in their own lives. It is in this particular sub-section that learners articulate and define their beliefs regarding power.

In the open-ended questionnaire, a substantial number (42) of learners defined power primarily as a phenomenon of control over others. Their definitions encompassed diverse forms of control including physical control, mental coercion and influence, and authoritative control. This aligns with the notions of power espoused by scholars such as Lukes (1986) and Dahl (1957), who contend that, given the extensive scope of the phenomenon is society, power can be exercised in various ways.

Abby articulated that the extent of one's influence over others directly correlates with the amount of power they possess, which she aptly sums up as follows: "*The more influential one is the more power they have, or the more famous one is the more power they have".* This suggests that she constructs her views of power based on the support one garners from others. Her response perpetuates the notion of unequal power relations in the play as it offers insight into an embedded notion of control in the social order. Max presents an alternate viewpoint, suggesting that everyone desires power, yet individuals wield it in distinct ways. According to him, power has the potential to impact one's values and morals. Drawing on the play, he highlights Lady Macbeth's pursuit of power, noting how it led her to influence Macbeth into committing murder. Max further observes that this association with power marks the onset of greed. He remarks:

Power is something that we all want, it is what gives us control of our lives, but the outcomes of it, are what can affect our values and morals. For instance, in the play, the tragedy of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth wanted to have power and pushed Macbeth to murder Duncan so he could become king. It is like greed.

Nomfundo expressed a similar sentiment, asserting that the desire for power is universal, as it places individuals in positions of authority. She acknowledges the potential for power to make one "*greedy*, but *it depends on how you use it*". When considered in the domain of human social interaction, power is deemed by Dahl (1957) as ubiquitous. Sharma (2018) asserts that power is an indispensable feature of social life, therefore, there is no society without power and subsequently, no one can live outside the relations of power. While many scholars (Nye, 2020; Pansardi, 2021) view power as the ability of an agent to assert their will over the powerless, treating power as a possession, Foucault (as cited in Sharma, 2018) proposes an alternative perspective. According to Foucault, power is more of a strategy than a possession. This notion aligns with Nomfundo's assertion that "*depends on how you use it"*.

Similarly, Patrick defined power as the ability for manipulation and authority that is beyond questioning. This concept aligns with the notion of totalitarianism. This is captured in his words: "*It is a person's capacity for extreme manipulation and influence over people, nobody can question*". Charles reinforces the idea of authority in his definition by stating that "*power is having authority over people*", whilst Amahle uses the word "*rule*" to express authority that can be attained through a position. She added that "*power is a position to be attained to demand from others*". Amahle's beliefs about power diverge from Nomfundo's, as she asserts that power can be acquired through a specific *position*, providing the powerholder with control over others. This perspective finds support in Bosch's (2015) assertion that sources of power, including material, social, and personal factors, can place an individual in a position of power over others. Consequently, it creates a network of inherent social forces wherein actors wield power over others (Dowding, 2008).

Alexa alludes to the concept of 'power' for bringing about change, but the specific nature of that change remains unclear. Rather than providing clarity, she suggests that power is synonymous with being greedy for change, which imparts a negative connotation to her perception of power. She elucidates, "*I would define it as implementing change and being greedy for it*". Galinsky et al. (2008) elaborated on the concept of power, asserting that it involves one's control over valued resources. This control, they suggest, influences individual

psychology in a manner that prompts powerful individuals to think and act in ways that contribute to the preservation and acquisition of power. Consequently, the outcomes of power may be oriented towards advancing the interests of those in positions of power (Lukes, 1986).

Wendy noted that power is possessing the ability to "*stop or do something*", and Ron defined power as having "*ultimate authority and manipulating situations*" in the powerholder's favour. Harry bolsters the idea of control by using words like "*commanding people*" without the threat of resistance. He contends that "*power is commanding people without them even questioning you".* Bosch (2015) provides additional perspective on the responses of learners like Wendy, Ron, and Harry, asserting that powerholders legitimise commands and obedience to create an appearance of legitimacy for subjects. This, in turn, contributes to the establishment of systems of authority.

Findings in the open-ended questionnaire also identified five learners defining power as a phenomenon that changes people. To offer insight into the type of change learners wrote about, Asanda claims that "*power can take over control of one's mind and turn one into a monster who does bad things*". Her conception of power closely aligns with the play, as in Macbeth, the character undergoes significant changes in his nature and is considered a dynamic character in his quest for kingship (Chamberlain, 2005). In addition, Thando adds that it can make people evil and change a pure heart. This is evident as she stated that "*power is something that can turn people to be evil even though they have a pure heart*". The aforementioned data introduces malicious character traits, which contrasts with the findings of Zerwas et al. (2022) and Galinsky et al. (2008). Their studies suggested that powerholders typically exhibit self-efficacy and have the capacity to control their emotions, making choices that are advantageous to them. Lammers et al. (2010) further characterised powerholders as individuals who enforce stringent moral standards on others and are more critical in their judgements, all the while practicing less strict moral behaviour themselves.

While the majority of learners defined power as the ability to control others, individuals like Amahle highlighted that power can exert influence over the powerholder, leading them from a virtuous nature to embracing malevolence in the pursuit or retention of power. Amahle stated that "*power can control anyone, it can take over you and make you do bad things*". Similarly, Siya noted that it "*strips humanity*" of people and "*makes them do various things*". Matt uses a simile to compare power to a *weapon*. Power, which is perceived as a *weapon,* can be used to earn respect from everyone. He stated that "*power is like a weapon. You get respect from everyone and then you can use their respect for you to control them*". As suggested by

the data, learners construct their beliefs about power based on Freire's (1970) notion of dehumanisation which is also evident in the play.

Seven learners believed that power is the ability to exert physical force over people. This construct of power is literal as compared to the connotative constructs of other learners. Power as a phenomenon of physical force is evident in the play as Macbeth demonstrated that murder and violence were his primary tactics to attain kingship and attempt to maintain it. Lungelo, along with six other learners, asserts that power places individuals in a position to make decisions, emphasising the necessity of bravery to assume the associated responsibilities. Lungelo used words like do "*not falter and act*" to construct his views.

Furthermore, Abby considers power as a "*physical force*", which enables one to "*do something without fear*". Mikayla defines powerholders as individuals capable of doing things others cannot, suggesting a connection to the privileges that often accompany positions of power. She stated that "*you can do something the other person cannot*". Mike defined power as the act of influencing people, noting that it can be "*sometimes physical*". Lunga used the words "*brave*" and "*untouchable*" to define power. Olwethu holds the belief that power is linked to respect through fear. This perspective associates physical violence as a source of power, potentially influenced by the portrayal of characters in the play who utilised physical violence to address conflicts.

In the interviews, Chris said that power is the ability to influence people mentally. It is also the ability to make them do things your way. This sentiment is captured in the following excerpt:

> *I would define power as having the ability to influence others to mentally have a hold on them to be able to sway them to move to your thinking or doing things or physically you can make people do whatever you want them to do influencing to control them in that sense.*

Based on Chris's response, it becomes clear that her understanding of power aligns with a phenomenon correlated with mental coercion, akin to the power that Lady Macbeth exercised over Macbeth to compel him to fulfil her desires (Mohammad, 2019). Max also claimed that power is the ability to "*influence others mentally*" so that they can be "*manipulated*" to subscribe to the powerholder's viewpoints and favour. He also reinforces the idea of people being under the control of the powerholder.

Lungelo's perspective on power differs from other learners, as he believes that power involves having authority not only over people but also over property and land. Lungelo holds the idea that individuals who own land possess the ability to influence and dictate matters to others. He drew a connection between his belief and laws, indicating that it aligns with the government's power to control land ownership. He stated that,

> *It's the ability to be able to have authority over a lot of people or property and land and this can give you permission to be able to do laws, rules and rule certain places.*

Nicole emphasised that control and manipulation over people is what defines power as she stated that "*so I could say it's the control and manipulation one could have over people and things*". Whereas Ayanda uses different words such as "*authority*" and "*without questions*". Kim articulated that power can be assessed through instructions and obedience. According to her, the ability to give directions and observe how others comply or resist determines the extent of one's power. If individuals refrain from questioning the instructions, she perceives them as being very powerful. She added:

> *It would be the ability to tell people to do something and how they respond to it would be power. if you told someone to do something and they don't question you and they just do it, I would say you would be very powerful.*

Erin defines power by stating that is "*making people fear you"*. The association of fear with power resonates with the play, particularly in the case of Macbeth, as he evolved into a tyrant who ruled over Scotland (Nabhan, 2020). She stated that power is "*to show…to show fear in others and for them to realise that you are not something to be played with*".

Andiswa presents a more political definition of power, using the government as an example. According to her, power involves having control. She illustrates this by noting that voters place the government in a position of power, but once in power, the government may prioritise its interests over those of the people. There is a sense that once in power, the focus becomes retaining that power for themselves. She stated that,

I would define power as having control of the output. Like me being a political leader, everyone votes for me. I give them promises. Once they put me as the election winner, I won't fulfil all my promises because I am in power right now, I get to dictate what I want to and not the other people even though the people could be where I am supposed to be.

Andiswa acknowledges that the government attains power through the voting process, but she expresses disappointment in the government's failure, as a powerholder, to govern in the best interests of the people who elected them. This data is noteworthy as it reflects Andiswa's critical perspective on the power citizens wield in electing governments and holding them accountable, particularly from a social justice standpoint. Drawing on Giroux and McLaren's (1986) claim that the critical pedagogy classroom needs to be a space that develops active citizens, Andiswa's claim attests to a critical outlook of her political experiences. This suggests that she may evolve into an informed and engaged intellectual, particularly when it comes to making decisions like casting her vote.

Within this theme, it is apparent that learners shape their perspectives on power by interpreting and analysing the literary elements present in the text. They demonstrate a reader-response approach, crafting their understandings of the phenomenon. These constructs encompass elements such as fear, control and authority, physical force, and the political will to address social injustice – elements that resonate with the themes found in the play, *Macbeth.*

A key goal of critical pedagogy is to challenge and help transform the power relations that shape social inequalities. The learners demonstrated a raised consciousness of issues of social justice by engaging with dominant narratives of power in social and political domains. Building upon Mellor and Patterson's (2000) assertion regarding reading within and against the context of the text, learners scrutinised the values the text promotes. This approach allowed them to affirm, oppose, and explore their beliefs about power within their social circumstances. The goal was to attain critical understandings of power relations that harbour the potential for transformative agency.

The findings within this theme also encourage teachers to design assignments that position students as agents of change by setting up opportunities for them to transfer their critical reading of the play, *Macbeth,* to some type of critical reflection and possibility for social transformation. Borksheim-Black et al. (2014) observed that taking an *against* stance toward literature assessment empowers teachers of canonical literature to be effective facilitators of

active citizenship through assessments. This approach helps dislodge the banking method of education.

Thus, the diagram in Figure 25 below illustrates learners' various constructions that make up the structure of the phenomenon of power.

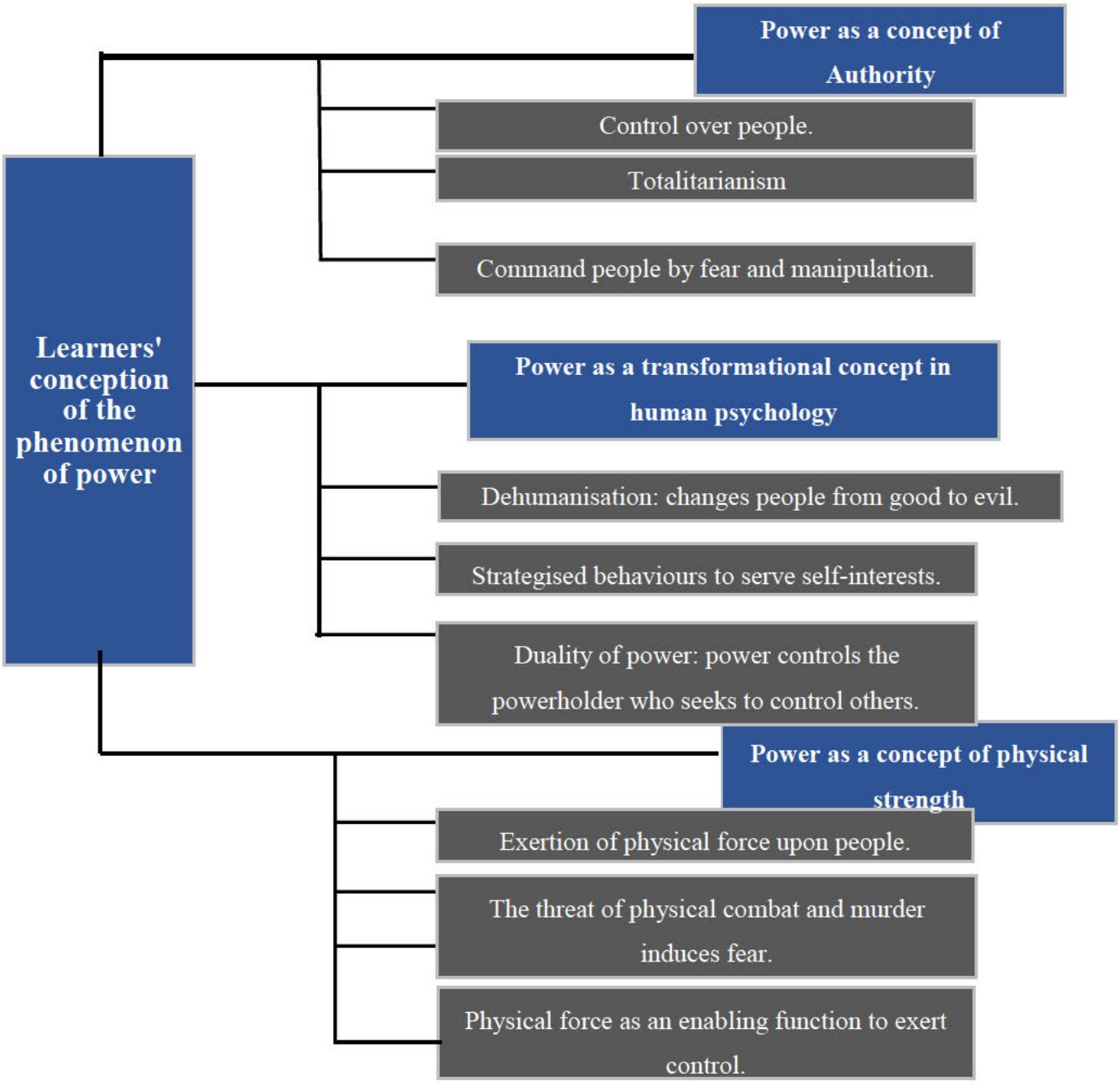


Figure 25: Learners' construction of the phenomenon of power

7.3 Conclusion

The study used an open-ended questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and visual tasks to explore learners' examination of power dynamics in the text, *Macbeth*, which acted as a catalyst for them to critically analyse issues of power in both their personal lives and broader societal contexts. The integration of Critical Pedagogy and CLP principles played a pivotal role in evaluating my teaching of the play, fostering learners' awareness of power dynamics, and nurturing their critical thinking skills. Consequently, the 55 participants, who were Grade 11 English Home Language learners, delved into exploring social injustices, marking the initial steps toward enhancing their political agency to address power-related issues in their lives. The final chapter that follows concludes the study.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS & CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This study aimed to understand how two Grade 11 English Home Language classes interacted with power dynamics in the play *Macbeth,* using it as a catalyst to explore power-related issues in their own lives. To establish the play as a catalyst, I initially examined how learners perceived and comprehended power issues through the portrayal of characters and events, engaging with ideas of leadership. Thereafter, I identified the power-related issues they recognised in their personal lives. This process enabled me to discern the reasons behind the learners' identification of power-related issues in their lives and how these corresponded to the various power dynamics they perceived in the play. Through the analysis of the data, I was able to understand how the learners engaged with issues of power in the play to construct their conceptions of power within their own lives and communities.

This study held significance because the play *Macbeth* has been a consistent component of the English Home Language syllabus. Encouraging a critical examination of the text's prevailing ideologies on power issues was crucial to prevent learners from unintentionally perpetuating unjust or discriminatory beliefs. The aim was to ensure awareness of alternative ways of acting, thus fostering a more informed and equitable perspective among the learners. By incorporating issues of social justice and agency, this study aligns with the CAPS for teaching literature, providing a practical framework.

In this concluding chapter, the main findings of the study will be examined, along with the implications they carry. Additionally, the chapter will address the study's limitations before proposing areas for future research.

8.2 Summary of Main Findings

This study has allowed the researcher to understand the way in which learners engage with issues of power in Shakespeare’s play, *Macbeth*. The findings were able to answer the research questions guiding the study. In this section, I provide a detailed summary of the main findings.

8.2.1 Learners' recognition of issues of power in the play, Macbeth

The significance of learners' acknowledgment of power dynamics embodied by the characters of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth serves as an indication of their conceptualisation of power as a phenomenon. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this section of the study is that most learners were able to recognise nuanced issues of power represented in bothcharacters that propelled their pursuit for power. The learners identified manipulation, deception, greed, status, dictatorship, evil, and ambition as contributing factors to the rise andfall of the two characters from power. Additionally, the learners demonstrated awareness and comprehension of the patriarchal system that surrounded and influenced the portrayal of LadyMacbeth and Macbeth as a power issue. Furthermore, they recognised other power dynamics,such as the influence of the witches and the powerlessness of Duncan.

The significance of the aforementioned findings underscores that learners possess a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of power. Consequently, they should be recognised as valuable contributors to knowledge rather than passive recipients in the English Home Language classroom, especially when engaging with Shakespearean texts like *Macbeth*.

8.2.2 Learners' engagement with issues of power through Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

The findings revealed that most learners believed that Lady Macbeth was more powerful than Macbeth because she controlled Macbeth's actions and thoughts. This enabled the learners to harness the idea of having negative control over people's actions and thoughts as an issue of power. The findings indicated that learners not only acknowledged the theme of control in the play but also discerned the methods and instruments Lady Macbeth employed to establish control over Macbeth. The significance of learners recognising and comprehending Lady Macbeth's strategic manipulation of Macbeth by imposing prevailing societal norms of masculinity is firmly substantiated by the study's findings. The findings also uncovered the learners' awareness of the risks associated with adhering to traditional gender representations.

The physicality and violent nature of Macbeth were the obvious reasons for fewer learners to recognise him as being more powerful than Lady Macbeth. The significance of the learners' recognition of Macbeth's power highlights their understanding of violence as an issue of power when used for social mobility and attaining a higher status by males in a patriarchal system. For these learners, their understanding of the play's embedded narrative of powerful men being portrayed as violent beings was upheld. It was also shown that learners grappled

with the idea of unequal gender roles and identities in a patriarchal system by placing Macbeth in a position that not only enabled him to attain social power but also granted access to such power to Lady Macbeth through him. The above findings emerged as important predictors of their understanding concerning the oppressive nature of a patriarchal system on both genders.

The second major finding was that learners attributed the motivating factors behind Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's actions to unchecked ambition, devoid of morality, propelled by greed, and a yearning for authority. The study also demonstrated that learners grasped the concept that power seeks more power, paving the way for political corruption. The results further suggested that learners could delve into the notion of the hazards linked to the quest for absolute control in the pursuit of wealth and status. The data indicated that learners were capable of discerning the connection between power and wealth.

One learner understood Lady Macbeth's power to be attributed to her love for Macbeth as a wife who wanted to see her husband succeed. The relevance of this finding suggested a disruption of gender roles in an intimate situation since Lady Macbeth took charge of the relationship but maintained that Macbeth had to prescribe to the patriarchal system that saw his violent actions as a mechanism to validate his place in the relationship.

These findings imply that, overall, learners deviated from the conventional interpretation of the play, revealing deeper, diverse, and more nuanced understandings of power-related issues. Such understandings might not have occurred had there not been a critical engagement of the representations in the play.

8.2.3 Learners' perspectives on the power to rule through Duncan and Macbeth

Concerning the learners' acknowledgment and comprehension of the power to govern exhibited by Duncan and Macbeth, a political dimension surfaced. The majority of learners perceived Macbeth as the more powerful ruler due to his tyrannical governance over Scotland, marked by his readiness to resort to violence and his abandonment of moral constraints in the pursuit of kingship. It was also demonstrated that learners acknowledged that Macbeth's authority stemmed from his association with malevolent forces, allowing him to defy the established social morals that Duncan adhered to. Consequently, Duncan's downfall ensued as he trusted Macbeth.

It became clear that the findings presented a juxtaposition between the two rulers of Scotland. Learners who felt that Duncan was a more powerful ruler than Macbeth argued that

Duncan represented social order which in turn upheld the status quo of political power being accessible to an exclusive group.

The findings in this section have revealed that learners' conception of power in the political realm was juxtaposed by social and moral disorder induced by Macbeth and order maintained by Duncan. This insight could potentially influence their political ideologies and decisions as active citizens in society.

8.2.4 Learners' engagement with qualities of leadership in the play, Macbeth

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this section of the study is that learners were able to recognise admirable leadership qualities that were separated from the destructive leadership qualities represented in the play. Most of the learners recognised admirable qualities of leadership by referring to Malcolm and Macduff who challenged the tyranny of Macbeth. These findings imply that, overall, learners grasped the importance of an enhanced agency to confront social injustice in the play. This understanding has the potential to deepen their awareness of societal conditions and power-related issues in the political sphere that may oppress them. Additionally, it was demonstrated that learners comprehended the possibility of challenging oppressive social structures in society.

The second major finding indicates that learners were intentional in choosing commendable leadership qualities in Macbeth. The results illustrate that an elevated awareness of power issues allowed the learners to admire Macbeth even before he pursued his ambition to become king, thereby challenging the notion that power is solely tied to the status conferred by a title or political position. However, the learners also recognised that power could change the character of individuals who sought it, as it did with Macbeth.

It was also found that fewer learners recognised admirable leadership qualities in Duncan citing qualities such as loyalty, integrity, and honour, which were similar qualities attributed to Macbeth before he was fuelled by the ambition for power. Their responses signified a thematic unity in characterising what an admirable leader should be by drawing on.

The significance of Lady Macbeth's intelligence and strategic thinking was found to be an admirable leadership quality. Their responses alluded to the agency of Lady Macbeth to advance herself in a patriarchal system that demanded her agency and social mobility be marginalised. In so doing, the learners disrupted the male-centred reading of the play.

Moreover, the learners' reactions to commendable leadership qualities in Malcolm, Macduff, Macbeth, Duncan, and Lady Macbeth surfaced as dependable indicators of their

heightened awareness of power issues in the play. This also advocated for their agency in addressing leadership challenges that might confront them in society.

8.2.5 Learners' explorations of power in political and social settings: Government and school

The study found that the learners made a seamless transition from exploring issues of power in the play to exploring issues of power in their lives. The findings showed that the learners' experiences of the government could be represented as an unequal power relation due to divisions of wealth. The learners further established the relationship between power and wealth as they associated powerful people in government with the desire for accumulating wealth which subsequently granted them power to control resources. An important discovery is that learners drew on the concept that the democratic ideal of economic equality has not been realized because wealth remains concentrated in the hands of the political elite, who have access to greater resources for the accumulation of more wealth. Their encounters with unequal power dynamics stemmed from their interpretation of Macbeth's quest for political power.

The significance of learners' experiences with unequal power relations between the government and the ordinary citizen was affirmed by the findings, which portrayed the government as an authoritative and constraining entity. The results suggested that the sole means of breaking free from economic and social oppression was to pursue powerful political positions. The learners discussed government power issues with a resentful tone, expressing a desire to alter the existing relationship between politics and wealth. The findings generally suggest that there is a widespread call among learners for economic transformation, which they strongly advocate for.

The second major finding pertained to the learners' encounters with power dynamics stemming from their interactions with teachers. In this context, the learners expressed discontent about feeling controlled by their teachers and harbouring a fear of potential punishment, identifying this as a division in power relations. It was also revealed that learners recognised instances where some teachers abused their legitimate authority, portraying a grim picture of the challenges learners face in their pursuit of learning. Such findings make clear connections between control and power.

The presence of an oppressive schooling experience that locates power in the hands of teachers only is clearly supported by the findings. The conclusions drawn from the present study are that unequal power relations between the teacher and the learner need to be dispelled.

Furthermore, learners should comprehend that the misuse of power by teachers is unlawful and should be reported. The risk of learners internalising unequal power relations may result in the reproduction of such relations in society if not thoroughly examined and addressed. The learners in this study have raised their awareness of oppression at the hands of people who were meant to empower them. Such awareness starts the process of developing agency to address it.

The findings indicated the frustration learners experience in their daily learning routines within classrooms adhering to the traditional method of banking education, treating learners as passive recipients of knowledge. The findings suggest that, rather than fostering classroom environments that inspire learners to engage with knowledge enthusiastically, teachers are succumbing to lifeless curricula characterised by inflexibility.

8.2.6 Learners' encounters and awareness of power in the dynamics of social relations

When learners were queried about power-related issues they encountered or observed in their lives, the findings indicated that the majority of learners reflected on instances of domestic abuse that they had experienced. This study discovered that learners were capable of reflecting on their experiences of both physical and emotional abuse encountered in their homes. They also explored the profound ways in which these experiences impacted their lives. By harnessing the idea of control and fear that were discussed in the reading of the play, the learners became aware of the tools that cultivated unequal power relations at the hands of their oppressors. If the learners did not confront issues of control and fear as mechanisms of power in the play and embarked on a traditional reading, they might not have been able to expose their abuse, in a safe environment, which is the first step in developing agency to transform their situations.

Providing a name and delineating characteristics for oppression is indeed helpful in identifying strategies to address social justice issues. Their responses are significant as they allude to households that are run based on the idea of imposing fear and violence. If this becomes the norm in their upbringing, there is a risk that they may perpetuate such abuse in their own households, considering it normal behaviour. The findings imply that learners harbour resentment towards the unequal power dynamics inherent in the abuse of children by adults. This may indicate a resistance to conform to such unequal power relations as they mature. While learners could write or draw anonymously, the recognition and naming of their lived experiences of oppression (with some solutions) might enable their future agency in confronting such situations.

Another significant finding in this section was learners' recognition of the relationship between the unequal distribution of resources in society that perpetuates the gap between the rich and the poor and Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's pursuit of ultimate power in Scotland. It was disturbing to note that the learners had a sense of fear in addressing social injustices in society since the powerful were known to act violently to protect their wealth. By making sense of such issues of power, it was found that learners had developed a sense of moral responsibility but appeared to lack the will to challenge unequal power relations in society, albeit for legitimate reasons.

One of the more significant findings to emerge is the learner who reflected on a domestic situation that was characterised by violence due to issues related to the financial status of the home. Wealth was described to be in the hands of one family member who exploited other family members because they depended on him. Thus, the only way envisaged to escape the abuse was for her to accumulate wealth so that her family could be freed from abuse. The power of wealth was seen as a negative and positive phenomenon in this situation.

Building upon the aforementioned findings, it was crucial to investigate whether learners perceived having power in their lives, aiming to determine their levels of agency. The findings indicated that a majority of learners believed they possessed power in their lives, expressing that they had the ability to voice their ideas and exert control over their actions to avoid exploitation. Additionally, it was discovered that despite experiencing domestic abuse, learners believed in their power to alter their situations by managing their emotions and staying true to themselves. This belief was rooted in their aspiration to eventually liberate themselves from their oppressors and avoid becoming like them.

This study has also revealed that learners connected their comprehension of the play's depiction of conformity to social norms and gender stereotypes with the realities they experienced. The findings suggest that the physical and emotional abuse emanated from societal norms and gender stereotypes imposed on women in society. It was also demonstrated that learners were cognisant of oppressive social norms that impose expectations on both women and men, compelling them to conform to prescribed behaviours, and the apprehension linked to resisting such norms. Thus, it is apparent that additional class discussions on these issues are necessary to dismantle the existing status quo to which learners appear to conform.

Fewer learners felt that they did not have power in their lives because they could not face their challenges, just like Malcolm at the start of the play. A diminished sense of agency was found in such learners' responses as they viewed their challenges as being greater than

their will to rectify them. The findings signal that further dialogue is needed to address the powerlessness experienced by learners.

8.2.7 Learners exploration of power in the psychological domain: The power of the self

The findings suggest that learners critically reflected on the power of being in control of their lives and the decisions they make. Their idea of control opposes the representation of control in the play, *Macbeth*. One of the more significant findings to emerge is that learners expressed strong civic-mindedness and civic responsibility to bring about good in society through their actions which also contrasted with the representation of Macbeth's tyrannical rule over Scotland.

It was also shown that learners had an innate sense of resilience and the will to challenge obstacles that might arise in the pursuit of their ambitions. Early in the study, the learners recognised the idea of ambition, represented through the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as a destructive concept that was heightened by external forces. The findings indicate that the impetus behind learners' ambitions originated from within and were closely tied to the concept of social justice. There is a possibility that these learners could inspire others who feel powerless in abusive situations to become aware of the inherent power within themselves as a starting point in overcoming the abuse they face.

The findings also suggested that some female learners deviated from the established norms of gender roles and identities portrayed in both the play and society. They demonstrated a robust sense of agency by confidently voicing their opinions and making decisions. It is conceivable that these learners might empower others who adhere to the marginalised representation of women in the play and society. This empowerment could lead them to recognise their agency to act autonomously, without the need for a male through whom power can be accessed.

Another significant finding was that learners leveraged the power within themselves to mitigate the oppression they faced from bullies, with the aspiration of inspiring other victims to realise similar empowerment. The results show that the learners found power in speaking positively about themselves to dismantle any stronghold bullies could have on them in the psychological domain. It was also demonstrated that the degree of power bullies achieved was contingent on the extent to which the victim was willing to succumb to their oppression. The ability to prohibit external forces of oppression from impacting one internally prevailed as a

source of power in overcoming the scourge of bullying that many learners experienced in their lives.

These findings imply that, overall, the integrity of learners' character remained intact despite facing oppression from external forces. This contrasts with the representation of characters such as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who buckled under the pressure of prescribing to external forces.

8.2.8 Learners' conceptions of leadership and their places within that conception

When the learners were asked to identify the qualities that make a leader, the findings revealed that a majority of them expressed a profound commitment to selflessness in the pursuit of alleviating the plight of the oppressed and fulfilling civic responsibilities. It was also shown that the learners believed that leaders need to possess the will to create a just and equal society for all, a perspective contrasting with the portrayal of leadership exemplified by Macbeth. Furthermore, the learners acknowledged the challenges inherent in the struggle for social justice in their responses. Nevertheless, they regarded it as a noble and selfless pursuit that leaders must undertake, confronting and overcoming challenges in the process. These findings emerged as robust indicators of learners actively countering the narrative of tyranny prevalent in the play. Instead, they constructed an alternative understanding of leadership, amplifying their political agency to confront the societal oppression they encountered. Fewer learners prescribed to the representation of leadership notions of a leader being feared and violent to uphold his/her power, citing Macbeth, Duncan, Malcolm, and Macduff who used violence to attain and exert power.

The findings also reveal a consistent exploration of the relationship between wealth and power, with learners emphasising the notion that a leader must be affluent to sustain their status. These findings suggested that learners associated high-ranking positions of leadership with the accumulation of wealth. The presumption that leaders must be wealthy reflects the learners' perceptions of wealth as an attribute exclusive to a group of people in powerful positions. This perspective also mirrors their real-life experiences with leadership. Subsequently, the learners believed that leaders who were wealthy would do anything to protecttheir wealth and power, just as Macbeth murdered anyone who challenged his position of power as King of Scotland.

When asked about their self-perception as leaders, the study demonstrated that a majority of learners identified themselves as leaders. Their self-perception was rooted in their

loyalty to the cause of assisting others in attaining a more just society, characterised by mutual respect among people. These findings suggest a general awareness among learners of their responsibility to eliminate oppression, a perspective at odds with the portrayal of Macbeth. Instead, they align more closely with the ideals of social change embodied by characters such as Macduff and Malcolm in the play. It was also shown that self-control and self-awareness were qualities they believed they possessed which could make them good leaders. The significance of the aforementioned findings adds to the understanding that the English Home Language serves as a potential space for the emergence of future leaders in social and political spheres. Through the study of literary texts, including the play *Macbeth*, learners may be equipped to champion the cause of addressing social injustices.

While the above findings revealed positive and hopeful insights from learners who identified themselves as leaders, this study also brought to light negative perspectives from some participants. These learners, in contrast to viewing themselves as leaders, constructed leadership as an oppressive and destructive force. They perceived leadership as a factor that not only internally corrupts individuals but also perpetuates injustice in society. Additionally, they associated leadership with control, violence, and the apprehension of being challenged by those aspiring to leadership positions. Their responses vividly echoed the play's portrayal of leadership as a highly contested position, characterised by fear and control as dominant mechanisms inherent in the power to lead. The findings suggested that the learners, lacking the ability to exert control over people and instil fear through violence, did not perceive themselves as leaders. This insight might not have been discerned without a critical reading of the play. On a positive note, this finding points to learners' consciousness of issues of social justice as they attempt to resist negative forms of power in the play and society to shape their outlook.

The recurring theme of the relationship between wealth and power was also evident, with findings indicating that learners did not see themselves as leaders due to their perceived lack of financial resources. This finding suggests that learners viewed wealth as a powerful tool to exert control over people since they had greater access to resources. It was then clearly illustrated that learners acknowledged the association of leaders with wealth, thereby establishing an understanding of unequal power relations in society between the affluent and the less privileged.

8.2.9 Learners' conceptions of power

This study can conclude that learners' conceptions of power were constructed based on three overarching premises: power as a concept of authority, power as a transformational concept in human psychology, and power as a concept of physical strength, which became prevalent through a critical reading of the play, *Macbeth*.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that learners defined power as a concept of authority that sought to control people. It was shown that after engaging with issues of power in the play and reflecting on issues of power in their lives, learners constructed ideas of power from a totalitarian perspective in which powerholders command people through fear and manipulation.

The second major finding was that learners heightened their awareness of and sensitivity to how the pursuit of power could transform the mental state of individuals. As seen in the play, the ambition for power had destructive consequences on the psyche of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. The learners' exploration of these themes in the play demonstrated that the pursuit of power had the potential for dehumanisation. It revealed that individuals driven by ambition for power could undergo a transformation from goodness to malevolence. According to the learners, power fulfilled the needs of the one holding it, highlighting an issue derived from both the play and their reflections on social and political power dynamics. The duality of power as a concept that sees power controlling the powerholder who in turn seeks to control others, was also found in this study.

The third notable conception of power, as identified by the learners, involved viewing power as the exertion of physical strength. This perspective aligns with the play's portrayal of violence and resonates with issues of abuse that learners encountered in their own lives. The study demonstrated that learners understood physical abuse, particularly when it induced fear, as a manifestation of power. This recognition indicated that the powerholder could exert significant control over resources and people's actions through such means.

The above findings emerged as possible predictors of learners' raised consciousness of issues of power in social and political spheres through critically engaging with issues of power in the play, *Macbeth*.

8.3 Theoretical Implications

This study was underpinned by critical pedagogy and CLP. The application of the principles of discourse and dialogic learning emerged as an effective strategy, empowering learners to

actively participate in the interpretation of situations, events, and discourses in the context of their past and present experiences. The learners enthusiastically acquired meaningful knowledge, leading to valuable insights into the power dynamics they encountered.

Theoretical implications of the study's results suggest that an elevated consciousness among learners regarding power dynamics in the social and political realms better equips them to cultivate agency, potentially enabling them to transform oppressive circumstances. This heightened awareness also contributes to fostering resistance to dominant narratives surrounding gender, social norms, and oppressive or unlawful practices that marginalise their agency. The aim of fostering critical consciousness was effectively achieved, as learners departed from their typical response patterns by critically evaluating social relations, institutions, and traditions that contribute to the creation and perpetuation of oppressive conditions. Moreover, the learners engaged in critical reflection on what actions they could take to transform themselves and, potentially, contribute to the betterment of their communities in the pursuit of social justice.

The findings of this research align with the theoretical notion of addressing power differences that structure social relations in diverse settings, encompassing schools, domestic environments, and interpersonal social contexts, among others. Learners were able to uncover that unequal power relations have been shaped by the societal relationships they have experienced throughout their lives and would not have been critiqued if the guiding principle of power relations enshrined in critical pedagogy had not been facilitated in class. The significance of acknowledging the dynamic interchange between teaching and learning became evident, as I not only played the role of an instructor but also gleaned insights from the responses of the learners. This reciprocal interaction facilitated problem-posing education, deviating from the traditional banking model of education. This praxis led to learners' consciousness of exploitation because of their understanding of how power imbalances in class and society may emerge.

In general, therefore, it seems that the theory of critical pedagogy enabled most of the learners to know how to challenge the status quo and develop new possibilities for thinking about their schooling experience that is divorced from the notion that schools are merely instructional sites where the cultural capital of the dominant society is learned.

This study was also supported by CLP which aimed at understanding and critiquing ideas in the literary text, *Macbeth*, used in this study. For the present study, CLP focused on learners' examination of the connection between literacy and power relations as a process of

becoming conscious of their experiences of issues of power. The principle of reading with and against the prescribed text's literary elements and a reader-response approach to the text, allowed learners to uncover dominant patterns of power and authority that may otherwise have gone unnoticed and passively accepted if the texts were taken at face value in a traditional reading classroom situation.

The learners examined the prevailing perspectives of the text *against* their own viewpoints on issues of power and social justice, particularly in relation to gender, status, and wealth. Engagement in a resistant reading to the text's canonicity necessitated an exploration of how learners approached the text, emphasising that the manner in which it is read is as crucial as the content being taught. Together, the learners and I grappled with the idea of whobenefitted and who was marginalised based on the representations in the play, contributing to a deeper understanding of power dynamics in our lives.

The findings of the current study align to a large extent with the learners' success in reading *with* and *against* the text's context. The learners discovered the cultural and historical context of the play's patriarchal social setting, allowing them to draw on their existing experiences of a male-dominated society. They perceived this societal structure as an issue of power ingrained in the fabric of society, often taken for granted as normal. A reader-response approach to the text's contexts saw learners locating counter-stories from their lived experiences and perspectives to interrupt the dominant narratives in the play.

The results of this research support the idea of an *against* stance toward literature assessment that encourages teachers to design assignments that position learners as agents of change by setting up opportunities for them to transfer their critical reading of the play, *Macbeth*, to some type of critical reflection and possibility for social transformation. This study shows that by harnessing the principles of CLP, learners are capable of interrogating texts critically to expose and disrupt dominant ideologies rather than prescribing or taking for granted issues in the text's representation that could be replicated in society.

Taken together, the findings, in the light of the theories used, verify that the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*, can be taught effectively as a catalyst to raise learners' consciousness to issues of power in their lived experiences and start the process of engaging with social justice issues with the hope of transforming their lives, their communities, and the world. Thus, the oppressive banking model of education was dislodged from the English Home Language classroom practice to pave the way for a democratised and dialogical approach to teaching and learning.

8.4 Policy Implications

This study endeavoured to position the teaching of literature (Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*) in the English Home Language classroom to challenge the perspectives, values, and power relations embedded in texts. The goal is to equip learners, regardless of their socio-economic background, race, gender, or physical ability, for meaningful participation in society as citizens of a free country. The above position is located in the CAPS document. While the document champions the idea of critical thinking for social justice, practical guidelines in the CAPS document for teaching literature, such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, to Grade 11 learners are not provided to teachers of English. The lack of practical guidelines indicates that more training development programmes concerning teaching literature for social change and critical thinking should be made available to teachers of English.

The findings of the current study could serve as a basis for developing targeted policy interventions focused on teaching literature for critical thinking and fostering active citizenship in learners. The evidence from this study suggests that policy in the CAPS document may be used effectively when guided by a critical framework that facilitates honest interpretations and comments from the learners themselves. Being silent in policy means that the status quo may be replicated, or insensitivities could be enacted in classrooms. Being silent in policy also means that opportunities to have influence may be lost.

The inherent coherence of the CAPS document's policy regarding teaching literature for critical thinking, with the goal of enhancing political agency to address issues of social justice, aligns with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The constitution emphasises the importance of raising awareness about sensitive issues related to diversity, encompassing social challenges like poverty and inequality. Taken together, the findings of this study do not propose recommendations to change policy but to mainstream practical, critical frameworks of teaching literature in the English Home Language classroom.

8.5 Methodological Implications

The significance of using an interpretivist paradigm allowed learners to focus on issues of social justice that they experienced as well as to help learners consider their own transformation while I learnt from their constructs of ideology concerning issues of power. The qualitative research approach applied to this study enabled the generation of rich data through written, visual, and dialogical methods.

One of the notable implications of using a phenomenological research design was the suspension of representations of issues of power in the external world (epoché). This allowed for a concentrated focus on the internal meaning learners constructed about the issues they experienced. Consequently, this study provided an opportunity for learners to uncover and question social ideologies that might have constrained their perception of the power dynamics they encountered.

Given the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, the decision to utilise anonymous written and visual data, along with one-on-one oral data, was deliberate. This approach aimed to create a space where learners could freely express themselves, with the intention of preventing any potential discomfort among the participants. The data generation methods proved to be highly effective in corroborating learners' responses across all three instruments supporting the intention of triangulation in this study, which subsequently made the analysis of data effective as clear themes were generated. The richness of the data facilitated a myriad of responses regarding issues of power in both the play (*Macbeth*) and the lives of the learners. This indicates that the formulation of questions was largely accessible and effectively aligned with the objectives of this study. However, in certain semi-structured interviews, some learners chose not to respond to questions they believed might cause emotional distress when recalling sensitive issues. Their decisions were respected.

Issues of rigour and trustworthiness were confronted by the challenge of learners potentially responding in a manner they believed aligned with my expectations as their English teacher. Initially, responses appeared rigid and superficial, lacking the depth required for critical reflection. Many learners presented such challenges. However, these issues were effectively addressed through sustained engagement and the use of prompting questions that encouraged a deeper connection to their experiences.

8.6 Professional Practice Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for my present and future practice.

As both a teacher of English and a researcher, the interconnection between research and professional practice became evident. The implications of the findings for my professional practice underscore the importance of incorporating both critical pedagogy and CLP when teaching literature in the English Home Language classroom. This approach can lead to fruitful outcomes for learners, fostering critical thinking about issues of power in their lived

experiences throughout their educational journey. The significance of encouraging critical thinking was evident in the improvement of learners' writing, demonstrating increased creativity and purposefulness.

As the research advanced, the transformations in the learners became apparent, but the shifts in myself, their teacher, were equally profound. Both learners and I embraced knowledge with enthusiasm, enhancing the overall enjoyment of the learning process. This renewed energy among the learners spurred them to actively pursue, debate, and share their perspectives, as they recognised the value placed on their contributions in the collaborative construction of knowledge within the classroom. The results from this study have reshaped the way I teach English in general by debunking the attitude of expecting a particular type of learner to enter the English Home Language classroom. My appreciation for the diversity among learners and their capacity to contribute to knowledge was deepened as I listened to their responses regarding the power dynamics in their lives. Their discussions on political ideologies and their agency to enact positive transformations further underscored the richness of their perspectives and contributions.

The implications of using critical pedagogy and CLP in practice were disseminated among fellow teachers, shedding light on the positive outcomes associated with these frameworks in facilitating learners' progress. The implications of this new professional practice needed to be role-modelled so that other teachers could recognise the benefits of fostering critical thinkers to advance a socially just education.

The principle of the English Home Language classroom being a space that promotes the two-way stream of knowledge may be resisted by some teachers who wish to maintain the status quo of the traditional banking model of education. They may believe that discipline issues may arise during lessons if learners are given the platform to voice their opinions. Resistance from teachers in applying critical pedagogy and CLP in their classes could also emanate from the aching wounds inflicted by the notion of standardised instruction to yield standardised performances. A reasonable approach to tackle this issue could be for the Department of Education to workshop teachers on the value and use of critical pedagogical principles and implement research-informed policies from similar studies like the current one to debunk and transform the traditional approach to teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, it became evident that critical pedagogy and CLP can play a crucial role in cultivating a generation capable of thinking critically, reflecting on, and challenging

prevailing ideologies. This, in turn, has the potential to contribute to the formation of more socially just communities across South Africa.

8.7 Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation of this study is its focus on only two Grade 11 English Home Language classes. Consequently, the examples of power experiences highlighted by the learners in this study cannot be generalised to the broader population. For this reason, this study emphasises that experiences of power are diverse, and the interpretations assigned to such experiences should be approached objectively. These meanings are constructed by the learner, who learns to name, characterise, and develop their agency to transform their experiences. This study offers a framework for utilising Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* as a catalyst to explore how learners, through the study of the play, interact with issues of power in their lives. Importantly, this framework can be adapted to address other social justice issues and explore various literary texts.

8.8 Areas for Future Research

Further research could delve into how learners from different schools in diverse areas engage with issues of power through the study of the play *Macbeth*. Given that this study was conducted within a low-income community, it would be intriguing to observe potential variations in findings and their extent when compared to schools in middle and high-income communities. Exploring their understandings of the relationship between wealth and power, among other specific issues, could provide valuable insights.

It would be interesting to explore the application of critical frameworks to other Shakespearean texts taught to learners at various diverse high schools. Such studies could provide information on developing a policy framework for practical implementation to establish effectiveness in achieving policy aims.

In the absence of teacher development programmes aimed at cultivating English teachers in critical frameworks for teaching literature, it is recommended to conduct an action research study. This study could explore the ongoing experiences and attitudes of English teachers in utilising critical pedagogy and CLP in their classrooms. To advance the discourse, a more comprehensive understanding of teaching practices on a larger scale is essential.

8.9 Conclusion

The study set out to explore how two Grade 11 English Home Language classes engaged with issues of power in the play *Macbeth*, using it as a catalyst to explore issues of power in their lives. This dissertation aims to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the use of critical pedagogy and CLP to teach literature. These approaches align with the aims of CAPS, which seeks to effectuate the Constitution of South Africa. The critical pedagogical model developed for teaching Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*, in this study has equipped me with insights into how learners both establish and challenge ideologies present in the text and in their lived experiences.

This study has proven to be significant in paving the way for further exploration of critical pedagogy when teaching various aspects of the curriculum. Overall, the application of critical pedagogy and CLP in this study not only demonstrated to learners that change is attainable and that new possibilities exist, but it also transformed my understanding of my role as a teacher of English – a learner, a facilitator, and an agent of change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

22 July 2022

Jesse Junai Pillay (214554283)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear JJ Pillay,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00004479/2022
Project title: Grade 11 learners' engagements with issues of power in Shakespeare's Macbeth
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 13 July 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 22 July 2023.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 **Email:** hssrec@ukzn.ac.za **Website:** http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics
Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Information Sheet and Consent letter to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Mr. J.J Pillay from the Language and Media Studies specialization in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am a M.Ed student and may be contacted at [redacted]

Your child/ward is hereby invited to consider participating in a study that involves research his/her engagements with Issues of Power in Shakespeare's, *Macbeth*. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore and understand how learners recognize and understand issues of power in the play, Macbeth and in their lives. The study is expected to enroll about 60 participants from two grade 11 classes at the public high school. It will involve the following procedures: respond to a questionnaire, complet a visual task, and participate in an interview. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be for the year 2022. The study is funded by myself (Mr. J.J Pillay).

We do not envisage any risks to the participants. We hope that the study will create a deeper understanding of the play, *Macbeth*.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me (please see details above), my supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay, or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The details are provided below:

Prof Ansurie Pillay

Tel: 27 31 2603613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Please be assured that participation in this research is voluntary and that participants may withdraw participation at any point, and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss or other benefit to which they are normally entitled.

Please note that there are no material incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study. I would be pleased to provide you with a summary of my findings at the end of the study, should you wish to receive it.

All information will remain confidential and your identity will be protected at all times. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms will be used. All data will be stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office for a period of 5 years, after which all data will be destroyed.

Consent

I _____ (parent/guardian) have been informed about the study that my child/ward will be participating in that is entitled Grade 11 Learners' Engagements with Issues of Power in Shakespeare's, *Macbeth* by Mr. J.J. Pillay.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my child/ ward's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that s/he may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [redacted]

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact the supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay or the Research Ethics Committee as follows:

Prof Ansurie Pillay

Tel: 27 31 2603613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

_____ _____

Signature of Translator (Where applicable) **Date**

Appendix C: Informed Assent

INFORMED ASSENT

Information Sheet and consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Learner

My name is Mr. J.J Pillay from the Language and Media Studies specialization in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am a M.Ed student and may be contacted at [redacted]

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research your engagements with Issues of Power in Shakespeare's, *Macbeth*. The aim and purpose of this research is to explore and understand how learners recognize and understand issues of power in the play, Macbeth and in their lives. The study is expected to enroll about 60 participants from two grade 11 classes at the school. It will involve the following procedures: responding to a questionnaire, completing a visual task, and participating in an interview. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be for the year 2022. The study is funded by myself (Mr. J.J Pillay).

We do not envisage any risks to you. We hope that the study will create a deeper understanding of the play, *Macbeth*

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me (please see details above), my supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay, or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The details are provided below:

Prof Ansurie Pillay

Tel: 27 31 2603613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Please be assured that participation in this research is voluntary and that participants may withdraw participation at any point, and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss or other benefit to which they are normally entitled.

Please note that there are no material incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study. I would be pleased to provide you with a summary of my findings at the end of the study, should you wish to receive it.

All information will remain confidential and your identity will be protected at all times. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms will be used. All data will be stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office for a period of 5 years, after which all data will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I _____ have been informed about the study entitled Grade 11 Learners' Engagements with Issues of Power in Shakespeare's, *Macbeth* by Mr. J.J. Pillay.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [redacted]

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact the supervisor, Prof Ansurie Pillay or the Research Ethics Committee as follows:

Prof Ansurie Pillay

Tel: 27 31 2603613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001, Durban, 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Video-record my interview YES / NO

_____ _____

Signature of Participant **Date**

Appendix D: Questionnaire

Macbeth

Questionnaire

Please answer the questions below.

QUESTIONS:

1. How would you define power?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Is power positive or negative or both? Please explain.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Please provide four examples of power in the play, *Macbeth*.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Please provide four examples of power that you see or experience in your everyday life.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. Consider Duncan and Macbeth. In your opinion, who was the more powerful ruler? Please explain.

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. Which qualities of leadership do you admire in the play? Please explain you answer.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. What qualities makes a leader powerful?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Would you consider yourself a leader? Please explain.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. In your opinion, do you have power in different aspects of your life? Please explain.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10. In your opinion, what drives Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's actions in the play?

_____
_____
_____
_____

11. In your opinion, who is more powerful in the play, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth? Please explain your answer.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix E: Visual Task

Macbeth

Visual

Creative response:

Now that you have studied the play, *Macbeth*, draw a visual representation (picture; mind map; thought bubbles) to show the examples of power that you experience in your own life. This could be power that you have and power that others have over you.

You do not have to be an artist to draw this picture. Just draw. Use a pencil or any other stationary item that you have.

1. Reflect on your feelings in this picture. Provide a brief description of what you tried to portray in the picture. Be honest.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

The interview will be structured using opened-ended questions

Discussions may take an informal conversational approach to allow for the learner to be comfortable and honest in whatever they discuss.

1. How would you define power?
2. Do you think that power is negative or positive or both?
3. What event or example of power in the play stands out for you? Why?
4. Can you identify some examples of power that you see or experience in your everyday life?
5. Who is the more powerful ruler between Duncan and Macbeth? Explain.
6. Which qualities of leadership do you admire in the play? Explain.
7. Do you consider yourself to be a leader? Why?
8. What does it take for a leader to be powerful in today's society? Explain.
9. Is this similar to leadership in the play? Explain.
10. Do you have power in different aspects of your own life? Explain.
11. What drives the actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the play?
12. Who is the more powerful character in the play between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, why?
13. What issues of gender are represented in the play?
14. Do the issues in the play reflect similar issues in society?
15. What have you learnt from studying the play, *Macbeth*?
16. What are your experiences of power?
17. What are your experiences of power?
18. Have you been in situations where you have experienced the negative effects of power?
19. Have you been in situations where you have experienced the positive effects of power?
20. Do you have power over any people or situations in your life?

Appendix G: Turnitin Originality Report

turnitin

Turnitin Originality Report
Processed on: 29-Sep-2023 10:03 AM CAT

M.Ed By Jesse J. Pillay

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Appendix H: Editor's Letter

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28 November 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis (excluding the references) titled:

Grade 11 Learners' Engagement with Issues of Power in Shakespeare's, *Macbeth*

By

Jesse Junai Pillay

This certificate does not cover any alterations made subsequent to the editing process.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux